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New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cuba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/63/L.8/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 107 jointly with agenda items 44 and 112 at the 51st plenary meeting, on 17 November 2008. Members will also recall that the Assembly adopted draft resolutions A/63/L.27, A/63/L.25/Rev.1 and A/63/L.64, at its 51st, 68th and 73rd plenary meetings, respectively.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nauru, who will introduce draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1.

Ms. Moses (Nauru): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States represented at the United Nations, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Vanuatu, and my own country, Nauru.

It is a great honour for me to be here today to introduce our draft resolution, entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications", contained in document A/63/L.8/Rev.1. Since the issuance of the document, the following delegations have joined us as sponsors: Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Comoros, Dominica, Gabon, the Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay.

During the course of the past year, the sponsors of this resolution have involved the international community in extensive discussions on the security implications of climate change. We appreciate very much the support we have received from the members of the international community. Our particular gratitude goes to our fellow sponsors, and to Indonesia, which helped find a compromise text that will advance the international discussions on the matter of climate change and its possible security implications. In the light of the introduction of draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1, we hereby withdraw draft resolution A/63/L.8, entitled "Security and climate change".

We also thank the Like-Minded Group and the other participants active in the informal negotiations. They have all helped to enrich the discussion on this issue and have been instrumental in constructing this text.

Our special thanks goes out to the President of the General Assembly for his help in advancing our issues and for convening this groundbreaking meeting

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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of the Assembly. We stand here at a historic moment — a confluence of firsts. This is both the first draft resolution for the Pacific small island developing States (Pacific SIDS) and the first General Assembly draft resolution on the security implications of climate change.

To understand the backdrop of the draft resolution, I wish to briefly talk first about the Pacific, a region that has been relentlessly threatened by the adverse impacts of climate change.

The islands of the Pacific SIDS range from Nauru, the world's smallest island nation, which covers only 21 square kilometres, to Papua New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, which covers about 309,000 square kilometres. Tuvalu, made up of four reef islands and five true atolls, is only 26 square kilometres. Tuvalu is the fourth smallest country in the world and only one tenth the size of Washington, D.C. There can be no doubt that most of our islands are very tiny indeed.

The vulnerability of our islands results from the small size of our homelands, coupled with the volume of the great ocean that surrounds us. Scientists have predicted that that ocean will continue to rise at an increasing rate. The Pacific Ocean, in which we have lived for centuries, will eventually leave little of our homelands behind if urgent action is not taken.

May I reiterate the sentiments of the Secretary-General at the meeting of the Pacific Forum leaders in Niue, expressed in a statement delivered on his behalf, that "climate change is not science fiction ... it is real and present".

While it is anticipated that most nations will ultimately suffer the adverse effects of climate change, small island States, including the Pacific SIDS, are already grappling with dire and immediate impacts today. The impacts on our nations include the inundation of coastal areas, where the majority of our people live, the submergence of islands, loss of freshwater supplies, saltwater intrusion, flooding, drought, damaged crops and failure of agriculture, diminution of biodiversity, destruction of critical infrastructure, and a substantial increase in the incidence of serious diseases. In many cases, those impacts will ultimately render Pacific island nations uninhabitable, destroying our unique and ancient cultures.

As the rest of the world continues to debate the security implications of climate change, for our peoples the problem is astoundingly real. And whilst some countries may have the resources to mitigate and transfer their people to safety during times of natural disaster, we do not have that luxury. Our citizens, literally, have nowhere to run. Communities on drowning islands throughout the Pacific are faced with a looming homelessness crisis due to rising sea levels. For some, the only viable option is to migrate. While many have already relocated, more are expected to follow as more of our islands eventually submerge.

Let us imagine a country submerging as a whole; let us consider its territorial sovereignty, its population and its Government. Those are fundamental considerations, which, under international law, define one's status as a State. Some of our Pacific countries are in danger of losing their populations and their land as a whole. They will cease to be States.

Never before has a United Nations Member State disappeared. Now we are faced with the threat of losing many owing to the adverse effects of climate change. Let us consider a country that has been deeply affected by severe drought, can no longer sustain itself because its hydropower is non-operational and its drinking water non-existent, and can no longer produce crops to feed its people. Let us consider a country that has too often been washed over by floods and affected by other natural disasters that have taken away every bit of hope that they have for their future. It is important to realize that there will come a time when no amount of aid will be able to insulate countries from the impacts of climate change. We will all suffer sooner or later. No country is immune to the impacts of climate change, and the smallest of the SIDS will be the first.

Clearly, the survival of States, their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the impact on their neighbours are matters of international peace and security. The melting of glaciers and the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans will have wide-ranging effects. Droughts, floods and other forms of extreme weather will become more frequent, threatening food supplies. Plants and animals that cannot adjust will die out. Sea levels are rising and will continue to do so, forcing hundreds of thousands of people in coastal zones to migrate.

Recent climate studies have shown that the pace of climate change is increasing and that the effects are sometimes worse than predicted. In only the past four years, scientists have revised predictions of an ice-free summer Arctic Ocean from 2105 to 2070 to 2039 to 2013. Terrifyingly, some climatic studies have begun to suggest that the worst-case scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change may be too conservative. These trends indicate that we may be facing a climate emergency far sooner than we thought. Addressing the security implications of climate change is overdue and the time to act is now.

Against that background, let me now introduce the draft resolution.

The draft resolution is simple and genuine. First and foremost, it refers to the security implications of the adverse impacts of climate change, which are already being felt in our region. Resettlements are already under way in the Pacific. The adoption of the draft resolution will prove that we are seriously concerned not only about the global environment but, more importantly, about the survival of whole populations and the existence of their lands, from which they derive their sense of belonging and identity.

The draft resolution looks at the adverse effects of climate change in a holistic manner. It points to the relevant resolutions adopted by the Second Committee, as well as to the purposes of the United Nations enshrined in Article 1 of our Charter. It further reiterates the roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The draft resolution also recalls the relevant United Nations frameworks in the field. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Declaration, the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) provide the framework for the draft resolution.

The preambular part of the resolution closes simply with a factual statement, namely, that the adverse impacts of climate change, including sea-level rise, could have possible security implications. As I have pointed out, those implications are already being felt in our islands.

The draft resolution then invites all relevant organs of the United Nations to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change. Read in connection with the third preambular paragraph, it becomes obvious that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council need to increase their efforts to address sustainable development issues as they relate to climate change. It is also clear that the Security Council has the responsibility to look at the security aspects, a view that we fully endorse.

Finally, the draft resolution calls for a comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the possible security implications of climate change. It is particularly important that this report be based on the views of Member States and of the relevant regional and international organizations. The report will be the first of the Secretary-General to collect information on the security implications of climate change. We see the report as a critical first step as we move forward on this issue.

The disappearance of Pacific Islands is now projected to happen within our lifetime if we continue with business as usual. Conflicts are already being exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change and matters will only become worse. The planet will not wait patiently for further debates on the political aspects of this subject.

We are of the firm view that the adverse impacts of climate change have very real implications for international peace and security. We believe that the time is now opportune for all the organs of the United Nations to work collectively within their mandates and to intensify their efforts. The lives of real people from real places are at stake. The future survival of real generations, the continuation of real cultures and the security of belonging to a real homeland are being threatened.

Given the importance of the issue, it is my hope that A/63/L.8/Rev.1 will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: We will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the Assembly on the subject of draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1, entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications", upon which we are about to take action. I speak on behalf of the following delegations: Bahrain, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen and my own country, Nicaragua.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce that our delegations have decided to join the consensus on the adoption of this draft resolution, which is the product of long and intense negotiations and cooperation between Member States.

Our group believes that draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1 is a compromise text that retains the common objective and unity of purpose of the universal membership of the General Assembly on issues related to climate change and that deals with the important subject of the possible security implications of climate change.

As we stated during the negotiations, we believe that, in the context of the issues dealt with in this draft resolution, it is vital that Member States promote sustainable development while adhering to the Rio principles, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and fully implementing Agenda 21 and other commitments undertaken at the Rio, Johannesburg and other relevant United Nations conferences.

In addition, we believe that these concerns and challenges are more profound and threatening than ever, because of the failure to fulfil the various commitments undertaken and the lack of political will to take concrete action in this regard. Therefore, we urge the developed countries to shoulder their legal, historical and moral responsibility to, inter alia, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We also urge them to fulfil their commitment to providing predictable financial resources and to transferring the necessary technology for confronting new threats and challenges, while ensuring that such technology is eco-friendly.

We reaffirm the unique role of the negotiating framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Kyoto Protocol and the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in dealing with sustainable development issues, including climate change and its associated challenges. We emphasize that draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1 recognizes that the role of the Security Council is limited only to the maintenance of international peace and security, in conformity with the United Nations Charter.

Our group shares the point of view and the concerns expressed in the letter dated 12 April 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of Cuba addressed to the President of the Security Council on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (S/2007/203) and in the letter dated 16 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan addressed to the President of the Security Council on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (S/2007/211), on the occasion of the open debate of 17 April 2007 on the item entitled "Energy, security and climate" (see S/PV.5663). In this respect, we emphasize that the Council must fully observe and comply with the mandate spelled out for it in the Charter and with its proper relationship with the General Assembly.

We are looking forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the possible security implications of climate change, which should be based on the views of Member States and of relevant regional and international organizations. We therefore request that, in preparing his report, the Secretary-General take into account the views we expressed in document A/63/L.30 in addition to any further notifications by our Member States on the subject.

Given the aforementioned facts, it is absolutely undeniable that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are exclusively responsible for the course of action to be taken regarding the possible security implications of climate change. With this understanding, our group formally withdraws the amendments presented in document A/63/L.30.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1 is entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since

the submission of draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: the Bahamas, Ghana, Kiribati and Nigeria.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 63/281).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Metela (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro; as well as Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union warmly welcomes the adoption of resolution 63/281, entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications", and wishes to express its appreciation for the hard work and extraordinary effort made by the Pacific small island developing States in initiating the resolution and bringing the process to a successful conclusion. The European Union is pleased to note that a large number of countries have joined as sponsors. The sponsors of the resolution represent all regional groups and levels of development, demonstrating the global recognition of the challenge before us. The European Union would also like to take this opportunity to express appreciation for the spirit of compromise and flexibility demonstrated by all delegations during negotiations, allowing us to reach this landmark result today.

The European Union strongly believes that a global response to climate change is a critical element of international relations and will be increasingly so in the coming years, including in its security dimension. The risks posed by climate change are real and its impacts are already taking place. As this has become a global problem, the European Union advocates a multilateral response. The United Nations system must obviously play a pivotal role in that response. The adoption of this text is also a reminder of the urgent need for common action to fight climate change. The European Union, in this sense, remains firmly committed to reaching an ambitious global climate agreement at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen six months from now.

The impact of climate change on international security is a problem not of the future but already of today, and one that will stay with us. Climate change is already affecting the security of nations and populations around the globe. Even if progress is made in reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases, weather patterns have already changed, global temperatures have already risen and, above all, climate change is already being felt everywhere, undermining livelihoods and fostering instability. There is growing evidence that the effects of climate changes can exacerbate and catalyse processes leading to tensions and eroding institutions.

The Security Council held its first debate on climate change and its implications for international security in 2007. The European Union is convinced that now is the time again to focus the attention of the international community on security risks related to climate change in the multilateral arena.

For some countries, climate change is an immediate threat to survival. A number of small island States already face significant threats to their territorial integrity due to receding coastlines and the submergence of whole areas of their territory. The plight of these States warrants the special attention of the world community. That is one of the reasons why the European Union supported the resolution proposed by the Pacific small island developing States from the very first draft.

However, the European Union also sees climate change as a universal threat that will create new security dynamics and risks in all regions — between States and within States — by intensifying conflicts over depleting or scarce resources, by causing economic damage and adding pressure to critical infrastructure, and also by amplifying or triggering environmentally induced migration, thus increasing pressure on international governance.

Therefore, many of the most vulnerable developing States and regions will face significant additional challenges to achieving stability and sustainable development. New threats to human

security will emerge. The European Union's own external policies have evolved to take into account the new security dynamics unleashed by climate change.

As the security implications of climate change are clearly of a global nature, affecting developed and developing countries alike, the European Union believes that, by adopting the resolution on climate change and its possible security implications, the United Nations membership has made a first important step towards considering and addressing security risks related to climate change.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, which will help us to understand and analyse various aspects of this complex issue, and to the attention that the relevant organs of the United Nations will devote to climate change and its security implications.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States to express their views on resolution 63/281.

The Arab Group believes that the developing countries — and in particular the least developed, the African, the landlocked developing and the small island developing countries — are those most severely impacted by climate change. The Arab Group joined in the consensus adoption of the resolution, entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications", and stresses the following points.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the responsibility first and foremost of the Security Council pursuant to its mandate under the Charter, with due consideration for the role of the General Assembly under resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950. The overlap between the roles of the Security Council and the principal organs of the United Nations is in contradiction to the purposes andprinciples of the Charter and may undermine their respective mandates and the rights of the Organization's membership.

Climate change has an ineluctable effect on sustainable development and its three main pillars: economic development, social development and the protection of the environment. It should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Climate change is of central importance to sustainable development. Promoting sustainable development is the primary responsibility of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their relevant subsidiary bodies, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the United Nations Environment Programme. A binding multilateral climate change agreement exists: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. In none of this is any role envisaged for the Security Council.

We believe that it is important for all Member States to promote sustainable development by adhering to the Rio principles, in particular that of shared but differentiated responsibility, to work towards full implementation of Agenda 21 and to fulfil commitments with respect to the provision of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building for developing countries, as pledged at the Rio, Johannesburg and other relevant United Nations conferences in the economic and social sphere.

The Arab Group affirms that the Framework Convention on Climate Change provides the appropriate forum for addressing climate change and considering the measures needed to address climate change in accordance with the principles set out in the Convention. The developed countries must take urgent steps to honour their pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol. Those countries that have not yet done so should accede to the Protocol as soon as possible and actively participate in the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference to be held in December.

The Arab Group aligns itself with the letters sent by the chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China (S/2007/211) and the presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (S/2007/203) addressed to the President of the Security Council on the occasion of the Council's open debate on energy, security and climate held on 17 April 2007.

We stress that, in keeping with the resolution adopted today, the report of the Secretary-General should take into consideration the views of Member States and regional organizations with respect to climate change. We stress too that today's resolution should not undermine the jurisdiction or mandates of the bodies or organizations responsible for addressing climate change.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of

the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The States members of CARICOM, in solidarity with the group of Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) Group joined as sponsors of draft resolution A/63/L.8/Rev.1, on climate change and its possible security implications.

CARICOM shares with other small island and low-lying costal States an acute awareness of the reality of the impacts of climate change. The incidence and intensity of natural disasters and other climate-related impacts have increased significantly in recent times. The group therefore considers that there is need to increasingly expand understanding and appreciation of the impacts of climate change and to address its attendant challenges in a coordinated, resolute, effective and sustainable manner.

Since SIDS disproportionately bear the brunt of the climate change challenge, CARICOM welcomes the resolution's reaffirmation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In combating the formidable challenge posed by climate change, small island developing States especially stand in need of all possible understanding and support. The possible security implications of climate change provide an additional emerging and disconcerting dimension of the challenge. Indeed, for many of our countries, climate change poses an existential threat — a threat to our very survival. An urgent and comprehensive approach is needed, involving the full participation of all States. For this purpose, our countries attach high importance to the process in train under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and welcome the reaffirmation of the Convention as the key instrument for addressing climate change.

The resolution raises a sense of deep concern that the adverse impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, could have possible security implications. We take this opportunity to thank the Pacific small island developing States for bringing the issue formally for consideration within the context of the United Nations.

We recognize that there might be different perceptions as to the nature and scope of the challenges highlighted by the resolution. In that regard, we anticipate that the comprehensive report to be provided by the Secretary-General can provide a platform for the further consideration of the issue at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. CARICOM hopes to contribute its own views and perspectives to the report and to future debates on these questions.

CARICOM members have participated actively and constructively in the protracted negotiations on the resolution that the Assembly has just adopted, and we therefore join in commending the Assembly for having adopted it by consensus.

Mr. Natelagawa (Indonesia): Among the many issues which demand a united common response from Member States, including from the General Assembly, is the challenge of climate change. Over the past two years, leading up to the Bali Climate Change Conference, held in December 2007, we have seen that the General Assembly can play a crucial role in promoting unity of purpose on this issue. It is in that light that my delegation welcomes the adoption by consensus of the resolution entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications".

Indonesia recognizes the urgent need to address climate change. We fully understand that the impact of climate change is multidimensional and may include possible security implications. As the world's largest archipelagic State, comprising more than 17,000 islands, the effects of climate change on Indonesia could be a matter of continued existence for many of our islands, people, cultures and ways of life.

From that point of view, Indonesia understands the concern raised by the Pacific island developing States. Sea level rise triggered by climate change could set off a chain reaction which could adversely impact small island developing States, including the possible submergence of islands and territory and the displacement of millions of people.

However, gathering the relevant data and establishing a direct link between climate change and its possible security implications require further study and cooperation by all nations. Against this backdrop, Indonesia is of the view that the request to the Secretary-General contained in the resolution to submit a report on this subject matter is key to understanding the linkage between climate and security, if, after all,

there is any. In this regard, we encourage Member States to submit their views on this complex matter, as requested by the resolution. That will ensure that the richness of observations in the report is maintained.

Inviting all relevant organs of the United Nations within their mandates to intensify their efforts in addressing climate change will allow to work in a coordinated manner, which will strengthen the capacity of small island developing States to face the challenges posed by climate change.

Indonesia believes that the issue of climate change is, above all, a sustainable development issue. The challenge of climate change is therefore a challenge to our development efforts.

Let me conclude by saying that the issue before us is a complex one. Addressing this issue in the appropriate frameworks — the General Assembly and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — will provide all States Members of the United Nations the opportunity to deliberate in a comprehensive manner, which, we hope, will result in beneficial solutions for millions of people.

We align ourselves fully with the letter dated 12 April 2007 addressed to the President of the Security Council by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (S/2007/203) and the letter dated 16 April 2007 from Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (S/2007/211).

Mr. Muller (Marshall Islands): On behalf of His Excellency President Litokwa Tomeing and the people of the Marshall Islands, I bring warm greetings to the General Assembly. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports and aligns itself with the statement of the Republic of Nauru, whose representative spoke on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands fully acknowledges the complexities of the possible security implications of climate change. The issue of climate change poses unprecedented questions for the international community and thus requires a coherent response by all within a cooperative framework and involving cross-sectoral actions to address development aspirations as well as security issues.

For a low-lying island nation like the Marshall Islands, climate change also poses some very clear and obvious questions with respect to our very existence. The security implications of climate change pose a direct and very real threat to our sovereignty, survival and fundamental freedoms assured by the Charter of the United Nations. No longer can Member States afford to consider that the loss of entire nations does not create a critical threat to global international security.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is proud that the General Assembly has been able to work together on resolution 63/281 in a spirit of positive cooperation. The resolution expresses serious global concern over the survival of entire populations and their land in the face of climate impacts. By addressing climate change in a holistic fashion, we ensure that United Nations organs treat this issue with appropriate urgency and within the respective mandates of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We also seek the active engagement of all nations in addressing other climate interlinkages, including the human dimension of climate change and its implications for sustainable development and the law of the sea.

This resolution was initiated by a group of small island nations in the Pacific that are acutely vulnerable to climate impacts. For Pacific islands, climate change exists not only in the lens of a scientist, but in the very visible effects already observed by our communities. Our Pacific Islands Forum leaders identified the security implications of climate change last August in the Niue Declaration, and last September our leaders collectively urged that this body properly acknowledge the security implications of climate change. Last week, our leaders emerged from the Fifth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in Hokkaido with an initiative by the Pacific Environment Community, in which Japan will be working closely with Pacific Islands Forum partners to support practical, Pacific-tailored approaches to combating climate change. The Pacific Islands Forum and the European Union also issued a joint declaration in 2008 on shared commitments with regard to climate change, and additional discussions are under way with other partners, including developing nations.

All nations, and particularly the most vulnerable nations, may face intensified climate impacts, including competition for increasingly scarce resources, which may pose serious barriers for some to achieving international development goals. We urge all nations to fully express their views in the report of the Secretary-General called for in the resolution. In addition, we expect that the report will further detail

practical strategies through which the United Nations as a whole can proactively address these potential implications now and with due urgency.

In the low-lying Marshall Islands, we cannot move our people to higher ground, for we have no mountains. As a nation and a culture closely dependent upon our oceans and coastal areas, we cannot simply replace these areas or move our communities to less vulnerable locations on coral atolls that are already so thin that one can stand in the lagoon and see the waves crashing clear across the other side of the atoll.

As the Marshall Islands' highest point is only two metres above sea level, even the most conservative 2007 scientific projections of the United Nations scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), of a sea level rise of 20 to 30 centimetres before the next century, clearly indicate — and with certainty — that our national survival is threatened by an upheaval that would overwhelm our very land, our basic water and food security, as well as the pillars of our traditional culture. The worst-case scenarios offered by the IPCC of a sea level rise greater than half a metre pose even more severe threats to our existence.

Most recently, the IPCC scientific coordinator on sea level rise stated that the IPCC findings are likely to be "biased low" and that new research shows that the risk of ice sheet melts, which are already being observed, would lead to an increase of four metres or greater in sea level rise. Other scientists have further revised this analysis and recently issued a claim that ice sheet-related total sea level rise may be at a lesser rate of only three metres. That can hardly be considered good news, as it is a rate of change which nonetheless will completely submerge my nation.

The existence of a tipping point leaves us with a very small window for urgent international action, perhaps as little as 10 years, to avoid irreversible and abrupt climate impacts. The people of the Marshall Islands hope and pray that we will not reach this point of no return. For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, this situation is more than just a development barrier.

The Marshallese people have not taken these threats silently; instead, we are actively confronting climate impacts. Despite our capacity limitations as a developing nation, like our Pacific neighbours we are taking action and remain committed to building our resilience to combat the effects of climate change by prioritizing, among other goals, water security, energy conservation, the conservation of traditional plants and non-invasive crops to address coastal erosion, and food security by promoting climate-sensitive strategies. We are also committed to implementing ecosystem approaches to adaptation, such as the Micronesia Challenge, which is a subregional commitment to conserving 30 per cent of our near-shore marine and 20 per cent of our terrestrial resources.

We are also doing our part to implement renewable energy strategies to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, even though they are already practically nil. We are revising our national energy policy as the foundation for meeting our commitment to significantly improving energy efficiency and to reducing our reliance on oil through utilizing practical and affordable renewable energy resources.

We seek to continue to work with our partners to build our national capacity to take on and manage projects and, at the same time, are implementing concrete strategies. Yet, we cannot fully remedy or reduce climate impacts, including security implications, without the ability to efficiently access funding for adaptation and mitigation that appropriately focuses on concrete results, and without a meaningful commitment to funding based on the "polluter pays" principle. Funding streams must be set aside and dedicated to the most vulnerable nations, with direct and simplified access.

We find some of the strongest support for our survival in the principles of the United Nations Charter, in its commitment to fundamental freedoms and in the respective mandates of the relevant organs, including those of the Security Council, to address security issues. It is also inarguably within customary international law that, like all Member nations, we are bound to commit to the continued existence and survival of the most vulnerable among us.

We wish to thank Member nations for their support in arriving at a consensus on today's resolution. The Republic of the Marshall Islands again expresses its gratitude for the awareness and commitment of all nations to this vital issue.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): This is quite a historic day for the General Assembly and it has been a very long time coming. I recall when negotiations on resolution 63/281 commenced last summer. At that time, there was a lot of discussion among us on what

the resolution was really about — whether it was really about climate change, security or development. I think that, in the end, we realized that it was about all those things, but mostly it was really about respect — respect for some of the smallest and least powerful States represented in this General Assembly.

These are not countries that usually make a lot of noise in this Hall. They do not usually come to us asking for much. In fact, generally, our experience with these countries is that it is usually us asking them for things — usually to vote for this or that. But, on this occasion, they came to us asking for something fundamentally important, as eloquently expressed by the Permanent Representative of Nauru.

I think it speaks well of us and of our processes that we were able to rise to that challenge. The negotiations were long and at times quite difficult. It is worth reflecting that our dear friend, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Palau, was able, during the course of those negotiations, to conceive, carry to term and give birth to a child before we concluded our negotiations. But, luckily, we adopted the resolution before the child was old enough to make a statement here.

There are congratulations that need to be made here today as well. First of all, I think that we need to congratulate the Pacific island countries themselves for the quiet determination and dignity with which they conducted the negotiations. I think that it is also important to congratulate the negotiating partners and, in particular, I would like to congratulate those countries that initially were not enthusiastic about aspects of the resolution but that decided on principle not to block it. To those, I say thank you.

Finally, congratulations need to go to one delegation in particular. At a time when things really looked as if they might go off the rails, one delegation, that of Indonesia, took it on itself to play a crucial brokering role to bring us together in terms of a compromise resolution, which is largely the resolution that we have adopted here today. I think that we are in their debt.

I said at the beginning that this was a historic day. It is historic for a few reasons. First of all, it is the first time that the Pacific island countries have brought a resolution such as this to the General Assembly. But, more importantly, it is historic because, in the resolution, we have agreed for the first time by consensus on the link between climate change and security. This is a link that is being discussed broadly in academic papers and security documents in many capitals around the world, but it is the first time that we have formally made that link here — and I think that that is very important, and important to reflect on.

Australia recognizes that climate change is a serious, long-term global challenge that, if not dealt with effectively, is likely to exacerbate the intensity and complexity of security-related risks, such as border disputes over resources, displaced populations and disaster management. For that reason, we have contributed some $150 million to a fund within our own region to assist with the adaptation and mitigation efforts. But, as we have heard today, in our region the Pacific island countries are among the most vulnerable, possessing limited capacity to adapt.

We look forward to receiving in due course the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on this matter that we have requested today. I think that the report has the potential to be among the most interesting and most important reports produced at this next session. We also look forward to seeing the relevant organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council, take this issue up as appropriate.

This resolution is indeed an important and historic step, but only one small step in the work that we have ahead of us to deal with this very important issue. However, I think that we have taken a good step and that it is important for us to take a moment to congratulate ourselves on this important day.

Mrs. Yang (Palau): Palau would like to associate itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Nauru on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States (Pacific SIDS). We are proud of the statement and of resolution 63/281, "Climate change and its possible security implications". We would like to thank the international community for adopting the resolution by consensus.

We are past the point of debating whether climate change is real, man-made and fundamentally altering the future of human civilization. In Palau, freshwater resources are dwindling and becoming salinated by salt water. Fields of taro — the food supplies on which my country relies — are being inundated by rising tides. And our culture, which has thrived, developed and endured since the times of Homer and the ancient Greeks, faces the real possibility of being wiped out.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other scientific bodies report that if nothing is done, we will face a future marred by famine, droughts, massive refugee problems, border disputes, energy emergencies and humanitarian crises more desperate and tragic than those confronting us today.

We do not carelessly call climate change a security threat. When we are told by scientists to prepare for humanitarian crises, including exodus, in our lifetimes, how can anyone say that it is different from preparing for a threat like war? Even Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has compared the effects of climate change to those of war.

What is most important is that we know the cause of climate change. It is we, when we continue to emit carbon even though we know it is warming the Earth. And it is we, the General Assembly, when we fail to act to stop this crisis from unfolding. In the years ahead, we will be judged by how we reacted when confronted with this knowledge.

This resolution is a first step towards changing our direction, but it is only a first step. We must not rest on our achievements, but must look towards the next steps so that we do not lose our momentum, our sense of purpose or our urgency in tackling this enormous problem.

When expert panels predict that flooding, disease and famine will lead to unprecedented migration, we must move to action. When our peoples are bearing witness to drought and crop failures, which intensify competition for food and water, we must move to action. When we face the potential for economic and political disruption on a scale not seen since the Second World War, we must move to action.

All the organs of the United Nations must act urgently. We include most particularly the Security Council, whose solemn charge is to be the primary defender of international peace and security. We believe that in the coming days, the international community must begin a dialogue on what the United Nations can and should do. We hope this dialogue will provide the focus, leadership and direction needed for the task at hand. We are honoured to be part of that dialogue, for through dialogue and discussion we can set an agenda for action that can bring us back from the brink of this nightmare.

The Security Council must seize itself of the broad issue of climate change and security and chart a way forward. As we know, the Council has a vast array of tools with which it may address this threat. We have seen the Council, in the days following 11 September 2001, call upon all States to become parties to international covenants and protocols relating to terrorism and to increase cooperation to better address the threat. Could the Council not consider similar action on climate change conventions and protocols?

We have seen the Council acknowledge the security threat posed by HIV/AIDS and integrate the consideration of this thematic issue into their resolutions on peacekeeping. Climate change is acknowledged to be the epitome of a cross-cutting issue and consideration of it and its effects could be integrated into Council resolutions.

We have seen the Council form subsidiary bodies on topics ranging from Africa, to terrorism to children and armed conflict. These subsidiary bodies address broad issues, where the harm does not stop at the border of one nation. The same can be said of greenhouse gases, the harmful effects of which do not stop at the edge of the emitting country, but put into jeopardy neighbours, such as the small islands. The Pacific small island developing States are among those nations least responsible for the problem, yet we will be among the first to disappear.

Under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council may investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute. Could we not envision the Council immediately investigating the security implications of climate change and recommending appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment if it determines that the situation might endanger international peace and security? Recommendations already exist in the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but they desperately need the strong backing of the Council so that they may become binding on countries that act only when they must, rather than when they should.

The solution to the climate crisis will involve many facets, but it must involve reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other sources of climate change. Reducing emissions must therefore be the focus of the Council's deliberations, and the goal of the Council must be effective, enforceable action to that end.

If the Council is able to recommend enforcement mechanisms for reducing carbon emissions, the root cause of so many future humanitarian disasters will finally be addressed and possibly averted. By adopting this resolution, we acknowledge that climate change is a threat to international peace and security. Now, the Council must acknowledge this as well and do what it can and must do to maintain or restore international peace and security.

If the Council discusses the ways in which it can apply its many tools and vast resources to reducing carbon emissions and then takes appropriate action, it will have lived up to its responsibility and mandate as the world's guardian of international peace and security.

We believe that our voices are particularly salient on this issue, because our shorelines will be among the first to be inundated, our fresh water among the first to be corrupted and our histories and cultures among the first to be destroyed if carbon emissions are not curtailed. We are asking the Security Council to consider our peace and our security when it seizes itself of this issue.

We have supported peace and security efforts around the world by sending peacekeepers to Darfur and Timor-Leste and by heeding the call of the Council to action to address the threat of terrorism. This time, our peace and security are at stake, and we need the Council's help.

Mr. Pita (Tuvalu): Today has special meaning for the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) and for Tuvalu, as it is the first time in the history of the United Nations that this body has considered a resolution on climate change and its possible security implications. I am therefore honoured to speak on behalf of the Government of Tuvalu in fully supporting the adoption of the Pacific SIDS resolution by consensus.

At the outset, Tuvalu wishes to align itself with the Pacific SIDS statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations and Chair of the Pacific SIDS. We also wish to convey our sincere thanks to all the Member States that willingly supported and sponsored the resolution. The adoption of the Pacific SIDS resolution by consensus today is a milestone and clear testimony that climate change is a global phenomenon that undoubtedly has security implications affecting all countries, especially the most vulnerable small island States, such as Tuvalu.

Climate change is certainly the most serious threat to global security and the survival of humankind. In particular, it is an issue of enormous concern to a highly vulnerable small island State and low-lying atoll nations such as Tuvalu, which resides right at the edge of existence. Climate change is a matter of life and death, and it certainly is a security issue from our perspective — one that could very well push us over that edge.

The people of Tuvalu recently celebrated their thirtieth year of independence. While we are a very young country, we are a very old society, with a history stretching back more than 3,000 years. We have thrived primarily on subsistence fishing and farming, and, while our traditional way of life has kept our families fed for many generations, it has never been tested by a crisis as large as the one presented by climate change. Tuvalu is not a contributor to the root cause of climate change, yet its people must bear the adverse impacts of a crisis caused by the actions of other countries.

The low-lying islands of Tuvalu are extremely vulnerable to sea level rise. The highest point on any of Tuvalu's islands sits at no more than five metres above sea level, with most of the islands at less than three metres. Recent research forecasts sea level to rise by as much as a metre or more by the end of this century. Such a development would be truly catastrophic for Tuvalu, but even a fraction of that will lead to considerable hardship and suffering.

Sea level rise is also threatening our water security, as saltwater contaminates our limited supply of groundwater, which is critical for maintaining public health and sanitation and for growing our food. The increased salinity has destroyed many of our traditional pulaka pit gardens and is forcing us to adopt more salt-resistant crops.

Climate change also threatens the abundant coral reefs that surround Tuvalu and support our subsistence fishing activities. Rising ocean temperatures can cause bleaching events, leaving a reef lifeless. Carbon dioxide emissions are also changing the chemistry of the oceans. In a more acidic ocean, corals find it increasingly difficult to form their exoskeletons and are more vulnerable to disease, parasites and predators. Taken together, coral bleaching and ocean acidification place a significant portion of Tuvalu's food supply in

jeopardy. Signs of reef failure in Tuvalu are already abundant, and fish populations around coral reefs have experienced a significant drop in their numbers.

This resolution comes at a critical time. Scientists tell us that we can still avoid the worst effects of climate change, but that strong action must be taken now. It is therefore paramount that the international community honour its commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which were reaffirmed in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and again under the Mauritius Strategy.

Climate change is a serious and destabilizing force that threatens the security of Tuvalu and every other Member State. The early effects are being felt most acutely within the borders of poor countries, but they will soon spill over into nearby countries as their neighbours run out of food and clean water. Tuvaluans have been among the first to taste the destructive potential of climate change, but we will not be the last. It is for this reason that Tuvalu urges the Security Council and other relevant organs of the United Nations to treat this issue with the urgency that a security threat of this magnitude deserves.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): My delegation wishes to add our voice in support of resolution 63/281, adopted by consensus this morning.

In 2008, New Zealand, along with other Pacific Island Forum members, adopted the Niue Declaration on Climate Change. At that time, our leaders expressed deep concerns about

> "the serious current impacts of and growing threat posed by climate change to the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being and security of Pacific Island countries; and that current and anticipated changes in the Pacific climate, coupled with the region's vulnerability, are expected to exacerbate existing challenges and lead to significant impacts on Pacific countries' environments, their sustainable development and future survival".

The resolution adopted today is historic, and it is certainly a step in the right direction of addressing these concerns. In particular, New Zealand looks forward to the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the possible security implications of climate change.

My delegation wishes to express our sincere appreciation to Indonesia for its helpful role in breaking the deadlock by producing a text that brought about a consensus. Let me also thank the Like-Minded Group and the Pacific small island developing States for showing the flexibility that has enabled us to reach a consensus. We thank, too, the many other delegations that have worked tirelessly and patiently to reach such a successful conclusion on this resolution.

Mrs. Beck (Solomon Islands): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting and for facilitating the adoption of resolution 63/281. My delegation would like to speak on the objectives, principles and commitment of the resolution and take the opportunity to thank its sponsors and those that supported it. My delegation would also like to thank those that participated in the negotiations.

The resolution was intensively negotiated over months, and its adoption by consensus today sends an important message of hope to the most vulnerable populations in the Pacific and that their daily struggles are not forgotten.

Before going any further, I would like to align this statement with the statement introducing the resolution delivered by the representative of Nauru on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS).

The resolution just adopted by the General Assembly speaks of the adverse impact of climate change, which is accelerating at rate that is now posing human security, food security, water security, health security and striking dominant security threats in countries of the Pacific. It has triggered migratory movements as more and more people become displaced through shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, agriculture disruption and increase of king tides within the Pacific, and especially among Solomon Islands' low-lying islands. I would add that Solomon Islands is already emerging from ethnic conflict and would like to see stability maintained.

The recent report on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change identifies these climate change security threats. The resolution calls on the United Nations system to deal with these threats. It is our hope that, by having the United

Nations principal organs, including the Security Council, deal with climate change-induced security threats, the resolution will allow the United Nations to be proactive and to do more before we arrive at a point where these threats become serious and irreversible.

Our time frame under the Kyoto Protocol is not sufficient for reducing harmful gas emissions into our environment. One of the objectives of the resolution is to bring to the international community's attention the fact that SIDS and least developed countries (LDCs), particularly those of the Pacific, are ill equipped to combat the impact of climate change. The resolution also builds a political momentum for current negotiations, beginning in Bonn this week, on the Bali Action Plan, to which we all attach much importance.

The principles and basis of the resolution are intended to help us address collectively these security threats by taking anticipatory precautionary measures to prevent and minimize the threats. The resolution also promotes sustainable development to better enable those on the front line of climate change to better respond to these threats with technology transfers and sufficient funds to carry out mitigation and adaptation programmes. My delegation takes this opportunity to acknowledge Italy, Austria, the city of Milan, Turkey and Taiwan for their support for the ongoing regional and bilateral community- and rural-focused renewable energy programmes in Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands navigate, thrive and survive on global cooperation. Thus, the resolution adopted today calls for the widest possible cooperation of all Member States. The sponsors and supporters of the resolution are from all six regions of our membership. We are very grateful for their support.

The commitment made in the resolution is to ensure that it remains a living document and that the international system has an effective institutional arrangement to undertake periodic reporting on the measurable climate change threats, especially to SIDS and LDCs, and to have the membership fully engage and maintain a deep sense of responsibility for addressing them. Deeper actions with nationally strong and appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures are necessary to address the threats in an effective and sustained manner.

Let me close by quoting our Secretary-General's acceptance speech, in which he stated that "[t]he true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most" (*A/61/PV.31, p. 9*). In this connection, the resolution adopted today is a 911 call for assistance from a group of States that need the United Nations most.

Mr. Vunibobo (Fiji): Fiji welcomes this opportunity to make this statement after the adoption of resolution 63/281, submitted by the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS), on climate change and its possible security implications.

My delegation supports and endorses the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Nauru on behalf of the Pacific SIDS and other sponsors of the resolution. We deeply appreciate and value their unwavering support, and we pay tribute to the Assembly for adopting the resolution by consensus.

When we started this initiative, little did we realize that we would ruffle some feathers and unintentionally step on some sensitive toes. We apologize for that breach of good manners.

We were encouraged by the reception accorded to us by the five permanent members of the Security Council. We were never given a lecture by any one of them; we were given advice and suggestions. On reflection, that particular reception on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council gave us enormous courage to press on despite looming difficulties. A reading of the list of co-sponsors speaks volumes about the intensity of our lobbying efforts, but more important it is testimony of human solidarity, for the original sponsors of the resolution are among the smallest and most vulnerable States Members of the United Nations.

Looking back over the past 12 months or so, our draft resolution generated widespread discussion and debate. However, the adoption of the resolution by consensus is a tribute to all those who had been concerned by the long and drawn-out consultation. Equally important, it is recognition on the part of the international community that it has acknowledged that the issue of climate change cannot and should not be viewed in isolation.

This resolution, we believe, touches a wide area of concern to the human family. It touches economic, social, demographic and political interests, and above all issues of international peace and security. At the end of the day, these concerns are part of the matrix that

affects our lives — and for us in the Pacific, our survival and the protection of our identity, our traditions and our culture.

For small island States, the security implications of climate change have been, first and foremost, a threat to our very existence as sovereign nations. All else will be immaterial if statehood is lost — lost through rising sea levels and warming seas caused by climate change. It is for small island States, a clear and present danger, a zero-sum game, if you will, that may just decide their future membership of this Assembly.

Our situation bears some parallel to the current global financial and economic crisis. Small island States have become victims of a devastating phenomenon not of their own making. Having said that, we have no desire to apportion blame. We must however acknowledge the past in order to address the present and plan for the future. We fully recognize that climate change is a global problem that requires a concerted global plan of action. This resolution is but one of the many plans needed to address the existential threat posed by climate change.

Fiji therefore is pleased that the General Assembly has adopted this resolution by consensus. We invite the United Nations and all its relevant organs, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and indeed the Security Council, within their respective mandates, to redouble their efforts in addressing the issue of climate change and its possible security implications. The journey to Copenhagen is thus strengthened.

To conclude, allow me once again, on behalf of my delegation and indeed on behalf of our Pacific community, to thank the Assembly for adopting the resolution by consensus.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The topic of climate change and its security implications is of urgent relevance. The security threat posed by climate change is real and its impacts are of global nature, affecting both developed and developing countries.

An impressive body of scientific evidence now tells us that even a relatively small rise in global temperatures can markedly exacerbate drought, water scarcity and destructive weather events, and can thus provoke the spread of disease, food shortages, human migration and competition for natural resources. Small island States are facing particular risk. Receding coastlines, for instance, can result in the loss of territory or even the disappearance of entire countries.

Even though climate change is not the only cause of all these phenomena, we cannot afford to turn a blind eye on the additional risks it poses. We will have to maintain and increase our efforts to face its implications in terms of security at all levels. Switzerland supports any effort within the United Nations to attract the attention of the international community to security risks related to climate change. For that reason, my country joined in sponsoring the draft resolution proposed by the Pacific small island developing States and welcomes its unanimous adoption this morning.

However, we regret that the extensive and laborious negotiation process has only resulted in a weak reference to the Security Council. Given the seriousness of the issue, we would have preferred a strong reference to the Security Council. The Council, in our view, has a role to play in fighting climate change and addressing its security implications.

We thank the Pacific small island developing States for their tenacity, patience and skill in this negotiation process. We look forward to continuing to work together with them and all other interested parties on this very important issue.

Mr. Osuga (Japan): I would like to join previous speakers in welcoming the adoption of the present resolution by consensus. The challenges of climate change and its possible security implications are now our shared concern. Japan particularly welcomes the solidarity demonstrated through the resolution to the small island countries facing growing threats to the well-being and security of their people as a result of climate change.

Japan commends the initiative taken by the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) and their tenacity and perseverance in getting this resolution through after lengthy negotiations. Japan reaffirmed its support to the Pacific SIDS by deciding to join in sponsoring the draft resolution at a very early stage. Our solidarity was highlighted just 10 days ago, when the fifth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Japan and the Premier of Niue as the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), was held in Hokkaido, Japan.

In this meeting, the leaders of Japan and the PIF expressed their resolve to pursue the shared objective of ensuring a secure, resilient and more prosperous region. To that end, Japan committed itself to provide $500 million to Pacific island countries over the next three years to assist them in the following areas: environment and climate change, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promoting human security, and overcoming economic vulnerabilities.

Climate change hits the most vulnerable countries in the world. In our endeavours to reach agreement in Copenhagen, we should take fully into account the need to help the most vulnerable countries combat and adapt to climate change. The Government of Japan, for its part, will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries through the Cool Earth Partnership.

Climate change affects the most vulnerable and poorest people and communities in the world and within a country. Adaptation to climate change, including disaster preparedness and prevention related to sea-level rise, calls for a human security approach to enhance resilience at the community level. For this reason, we have added climate change to the agenda of the sixth Friends of Human Security meeting, to be held tomorrow morning, 4 June, under the co-chairmanship of Japan and Mexico. I encourage all delegations to participate in tomorrow's meeting. In our view, Friends of Human Security can be one of the informal yet practical and useful platforms to consider and address the possible security implications of climate change.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada wishes to congratulate the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) for their leadership in bringing the important issue of security and climate change to the forefront of our work at the United Nations. All the Pacific SIDS delegations have spoken with great conviction and cogency today. The process of bringing forward a resolution in the General Assembly is often laborious, but the time, energy, and challenges are far greater when the concept being introduced is a novel one, as in the present case.

The global challenge of climate change requires a global response, and Canada is committed to reaching a comprehensive and ambitious agreement in Copenhagen this December. The current resolution 63/281 is an affirmation of our collective recognition of the possible security implications of climate change. The existential threat facing the Pacific small islands, in particular, gives this important issue a very real, urgent and human dimension.

Canada welcomes the calls for the relevant United Nations bodies to intensify their efforts in considering the possible security implications of climate change. We also note that the Secretary-General's comprehensive report will help shape views of Member States on this important issue and provide useful context to inform our work.

Let me close by once again thanking the Pacific small island developing States for their leadership and foresight, and for the collaboration of the more than 90 sponsors of the resolution. I would also like to thank the Like-Minded Group and other active delegations for their flexibility and constructive dialogue. Finally, let me pay tribute, as others have done, to the delegation of Indonesia for the positive bridging role it played at a crucial time in the negotiations.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): As the last speaker from among the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) to take the floor, allow me on their behalf to thank the General Assembly, under the visionary leadership of its President, for successfully adopting by consensus the resolution entitled "Climate change and its possible security implications" (resolution 63/281).

This is a momentous occasion in the life of our Organization and a high point in the continuing efforts of the Pacific SIDS to underscore the existential threat posed by the adverse effects of climate change to our smaller and more vulnerable island countries. History will vindicate the Assembly's strength of conviction as demonstrated by the adoption of the consensus resolution today.

A year ago, when the draft resolution was first introduced, achieving the result that we have just witnessed was considered untenable, far-fetched and naive. Even a few weeks ago, a consensus resolution remained all but elusive, and our Pacific SIDS members were beginning to question whether we had the perseverance and determination to pull this one off.

But persevere we did. Determined we were. Compromise and accommodation we practised. For true to our sense of moral and ethical obligation to our Pacific islanders, who have already been and will soon

be victims of the impacts of climate change, we continued to tell our story as truthfully as we saw it, untroubled by whether people thought foul of us and our motives. For there was no ulterior aim, no aim other than to share the truth with the rest of the world. After all, some of our members have the high moral ground and can insist on having their stories told from their simple perspectives, uncluttered by other agendas, world dynamics and unfounded concerns.

Looking back now, any doubts we might have had about a successful outcome are truly water under the bridge, for actions speak louder than words. Through the unanimous adoption of this resolution, the General Assembly has rewarded our resolve with its trust and repaid our fortitude with its confidence and faith.

For those Member States that believed in and stood by us from day one, through the thick and thin of the negotiations, no reward suffices because none was expected. In the Assembly, the Pacific SIDS have found a true friend, for a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Today's resolution is the culmination of exhaustive and protracted discussions with the wider United Nations membership. The text of this finely balanced resolution is the result of the pivotal role Indonesia played in bringing together all parties in an effort to bridge differences while respecting stated positions. We wish to join others in acknowledging Indonesia's leadership in this regard.

Notwithstanding differences of view expressed by various delegations throughout the course of negotiations, I think we can all agree that the threat of climate change to the livelihood, well-being and security of all our peoples and countries is real and upon us. The revised resolution just adopted represents for all of us a collective compromise, but also, a united call for the relevant organs of the United Nations to intensify their efforts and give focused attention to a particular aspect of climate change that has yet to be fully discussed and considered at the United Nations.

In closing, allow me on behalf of the Pacific SIDS to place on record our debt of gratitude to all the sponsors, whose unwavering support nourished our spirits and gave us the strength to continue to the end. To all the States Members of the United Nations, we say that words are inadequate to describe what the heart feels, for it feels the truth. The unanimity of the support has dignified today's proceedings, and the consensus resolution is a legacy that is rightly the Assembly's and ours to claim.

The President of the General Assembly came to our aid when we needed it most and he spared no effort to ensure that Pacific islands concerns were at centre stage, notwithstanding the multitude of global crises competing for our Organization's attention and time.

The facilitation roles of the Secretariat and all the unsung heroes behind the scenes have not gone unnoticed, and we warmly acknowledge their efforts.

Finally, to our Pacific island States and peoples on whose behalf this effort was first initiated, I say that I hope that we have not let them down. I hope that they have not misplaced their trust in us. We have taken the first and crucial step. We still have a long way to go before we can benefit from today's historic resolution. The United Nations is our sanctuary and our place of last resort, and we have every faith that it will not let us down in the long and uncharted road ahead.

Mr. Khaleel (Maldives): The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) clearly warned us of the adverse consequences of climate change and global warming, if left unchecked. That was two years ago. Unfortunately, today's statistics are much more serious and grim. Human-induced climate change is accelerating much faster and far beyond the IPCC's predictions.

The science is clear. Climate change is real. It knows no borders and has now become by far the most serious threat facing human security. While there is no longer a front line in the fight against climate change, for those countries like the Maldives and other small island developing States, with an average elevation of one metre above sea level, as well as for low-lying coastal areas across the globe, the situation may be much more precarious today than ever before. Thus, time is no longer a luxury that these countries can afford; nor can they afford to pick and choose where and when this important issue should be discussed.

Climate change-related conflicts are slowly beginning to emerge as water and other scarce resources are depleted, coastlines begin to recede, storms and floods become more frequent, and droughts are prolonged. As my delegation stated in the general debate of this Assembly in September, for the Maldives climate change "is not solely a development issue, but also a

moral, ethical, political, legal and human rights issue, as well as a grave security issue" (*A/63/PV.16, p. 40*).

It was against that backdrop that the Maldives took the initiative in 1987 to raise this issue before the Assembly. It was also the reason why the Maldives participated at a high level in the Security Council debate on this issue in 2007. It was the reason why the Maldives decided to raise this issue in the Human Rights Council last year, and it was also the reason why the Maldives unconditionally joined our brothers and sisters from the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) in submitting the important resolution before us today.

Unlike two decades ago when we first raised the issue of the real threat of some of the low-lying SIDS, including the Maldives, disappearing from the face of the Earth due to global warming and sea-level rise, climate change is a better understood and documented phenomenon today. We have certainly taken our time in reaching scientific and political consensus on the nature and threat of climate change.

It is true that two decades of global action have not yielded the results that we expected. Yet we refuse to give up hope. We believe that a true partnership with a common and shared vision of commitment and multilateral solidarity can still guarantee our future. Indeed, we have the means and the resources; what is lacking is political will. As the Secretary-General has been stressing, we will have to seal the deal in Copenhagen. If we do not, it may be too late for some of us.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Pacific SIDS for taking this important initiative. We commend them for this brave and courageous undertaking. The consensus adoption of resolution 63/281, sponsored by nearly 90 countries, signals the importance that the international community attaches to climate change and its possible security implications. We are fully convinced that the resolution will become an important milestone in the annals of the Assembly.

Mrs. Bianchi (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina understands and shares the concern of the small island developing States and other countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. In that respect, my country has always promoted appropriate treatment of that particular vulnerability.

However, as we have said on previous occasions, the appropriate context for addressing climate change is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, which implicates the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Sustainable Development, among others. Those bodies are competent to address this and related issues in a substantive way through due and harmonious cooperation in dealing with situations arising from the extreme consequences of climate change.

Finally, I wish to stress that the phenomenon of climate change must be addressed from the perspective of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, promoting a comprehensive approach to the root causes of the problem. That is why we believe that the Security Council is not the competent organ to address and consider this issue.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the adoption of resolution 63/281, which seeks to alert the international community to the adverse impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and the threat that they pose to security. The resolution also calls on all relevant bodies of our Organization to step up their efforts in that area.

We thank Indonesia for its role in bringing the process to a successful conclusion, as well as the many small island States that were directly involved in drafting the resolution that we have adopted. In that regard, we shared and supported the concern expressed by the representative of Nauru on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States.

Here, we cannot fail to recall the decisive contribution of the Pacific small island developing States to the law of the sea. If we wish to identify a potential disaster situation, which is what is behind this resolution, it is sufficient to focus on the existing facts and to ask where the greatest risks and vulnerability lie and who are the most threatened. Given that reality, those States are entitled to be listened to. The evidence of the major glaciers melting in both hemispheres is irrefutable, and the sea level is rising. The Patagonian glaciers, which are the largest ice mass in the southern hemisphere after the Antarctic, have lost as much as

42 cubic kilometres of ice a year, which is equivalent to 17 million Olympic-size swimming pools.

Studies carried out in the Antarctic show that the ice is retreating at a rate of one metre a year and, in certain periods, 10 metres a year. According to those estimates, if the Antarctic peninsula ice were to disintegrate, it would trigger an increase of up to five metres in the level of the ocean. Bearing in mind that many small island States are only two metres above sea level, the implied security impact is obvious. The resolution we have just adopted therefore accurately reflects the international community's recognition of that phenomenon and represents an urgent appeal for collective and coordinated action, which we believe will earn the gratitude of future generations.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America): The United States applauds the adoption today of resolution 63/281, "Climate change and its possible security implications", and is pleased to join the list of sponsors that includes the original proponents of the resolution, namely, the Pacific small island developing States.

We are encouraged by the General Assembly's ability to achieve broad consensus on a resolution concerning the urgent issue of climate change, particularly in these crucial remaining months leading to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen. We therefore express gratitude to the Pacific small island developing States and to all of our other negotiating partners for this collective negotiating effort in the General Assembly.

This past April, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed representatives at the first preparatory session of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in Washington, D.C. At that meeting, Secretary Clinton noted that

> "the crisis of climate change exists at the nexus of diplomacy, national security and development. It is an environmental issue, a health issue, an economic issue, an energy issue, and a security issue ... It threatens lives and livelihoods. Desertification and rising sea levels generate increased competition for food, water and resources. But we also have seen increasingly the dangers that these transpose to the stability of societies and Governments. We see how this can breed conflict, unrest and forced migration. So no issue we face today has broader long-term consequences or greater potential to alter the world for future generations."

Climate change is among the highest priorities of the Obama Administration, and Ambassador Rice has made advancing the climate change agenda one of her top priorities at the United Nations. The resolution adopted today reinforces the Member States' recognition that global climate change poses serious challenges to our planet and requires an urgent response and the widest possible cooperation by all countries, as well as intensified efforts by the United Nations system. The United States reaffirms its commitment to leadership in this global endeavour.

Mr. Rangel (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Nicaragua and join the consensus in welcoming the adoption of resolution 63/281, which ratifies our commitment to supporting the efforts of the small island developing States to adapt to the adverse impact of climate change, including through special financing, capacity-building and the transfer of appropriate technology, given their paucity of financial resources, high rates of poverty and the social problems linked to their vulnerability to the effects of climate change and related phenomena.

We wish, however, to reiterate our position concerning the seventh preambular paragraph of resolution 63/281, which refers to the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, paragraphs 26 and 27 of which refer to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In the understanding that this reference is addressed to States parties to the Convention, we stress the fact that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is not a State party to that instrument, and that the standards of the Convention do not apply to it under international customary law, except for any provision that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has recognized or will explicitly recognize in its domestic legislation. Thus, the aforementioned paragraph is not binding on our country.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): As a sponsor, my delegation is very pleased that consensus was established on today's resolution. The text may fall short of the expectations of some, but the patience and hard work of the original drafters, the Pacific small island developing States, have finally borne fruit. For the first time, we now have a General Assembly resolution that recognizes, with the full backing of the entire United Nations membership, the possible link between climate change and security. That is an accomplishment, and my delegation highly appreciates the show of flexibility by the different groups and countries involved that made this achievement possible.

The adverse impacts of climate change on food security, water availability and the loss of land in low-lying coastal States and islands due to rising sea levels are no longer subject to dispute. It is also recognized that such impacts can lead to forced migration and give rise to tensions over access to land and natural resources. Therefore, it is high time that the issue of climate change and security be given the attention it deserves.

My delegation certainly looks forward to future consideration of this important issue based on the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General that the General Assembly has requested through its resolution today.

Mrs. Pessôa (Brazil): Brazil welcomes the agreement reached on today's resolution and appreciates the efforts of all Member States in the negotiations that led to this consensus text. Despite some shortcomings in the text before us, Brazil joins the consensus out of respect for and solidarity with the small island developing States and in recognition that we are all vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Adaptive capacity is directly related to the level of social and economic development, as pointed out in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC also indicates that even if the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere were stabilized at current levels, thermal expansion of the world's oceans alone would trigger sea-level rise in the coming centuries.

Among those most threatened by these adverse impacts are small island developing States. Their vulnerability, like that of many developing countries, arises from the lack of adequate resources, technology, capacity and knowledge for improving adaptive capacity to such climate change-related phenome sea-level rise. In that bleak scenario, hope li enabling the vulnerable to build resilience in ord avoid humanitarian catastrophes.

This is further reason why the internat commitments under the United Nations Frame Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Pro should be fulfilled. Actions by all will be ne according to the principle of common but different responsibilities and respective capabilities. Devel countries, which have caused current and f climate change through over 200 years of pollu bear a particular responsibility to reduce emission support developing countries' actions to adapt to mitigate climate change through additional finan and technology transfer.

Brazil acknowledges the interdependence indivisibility of the concepts of development, sec and human rights as stated, inter alia, in principle the Rio Declaration on Environment and Develop and in the Outcome Document of the 2005 W Summit (resolution 60/1). That is precisely attempts to shift the focus of the debate development to security should be avoided.

There is a clear link between climate change development, established by sound scientific rese There is also a clear link between development security. There is no direct linkage, however, bet climate change and security. Determining whet given environmental impact gives rise to consequ that might represent a threat to security remains a complex task. Thus, the consensus on this text sh not be construed as a recognition of a link bet climate change and security. Brazil reiterates commitment to tackle climate change and its ad impacts in a constructive and equitable manner.

The universal interest in climate change and related implications demands that the main forum an overall political appraisal of the matter remai General Assembly, where all Member States equally represented and which has the power to dis any issue or matter. We should stave off encroach by other bodies on the issues of the General Assem

The General Assembly should send a st message of support for the United Nations Frame Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Prot In preparation of the fifteenth Conference of Parties, a delicate negotiation process is currently u

way under those bodies. We must carefully measure how to debate issues under consideration therein, so as to retain the authority of the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol and also move forward and constructively in the preparation for Conference of the Parties.

Mr. Liu Yuyin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We understand the concerns of countries with respect to climate change. As a developing country, China too is a victim of climate change. We are willing to discuss the issue, and have taken an active part in such discussions in a variety of institutions and forums. In the final analysis, climate change is an issue of sustainable development rather than a security issue, and it should be addressed by international bodies charged to consider sustainable development.

Ultimately, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the context for substantive negotiations on this issue. Within the United Nations, it should be discussed by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

In responding to climate change, it is necessary to uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, as established by the Framework Convention. That reflects an important consensus regarding the response to climate change and provides the basis for maintaining the global partnership in this respect.

The international community is now engaged in negotiations on the implementation of the Bali Road Map and on strengthening the comprehensive, effective and sustained implementation of the Framework Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, with a view to a positive outcome at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen at the end of this year. We do not want to see the resolution's request for a report of the Secretary-General having a negative impact on that negotiating process.

China is fully aware of the severity and urgency of the issue of climate change. In a responsible spirit regarding the long-term development of humankind, China has steadfastly followed the path of sustainable development. It has issued and implemented a national plan for responding to climate change and has adopted policies, measures and actions in an active effort to respond to that phenomenon. We shall continue our tireless efforts and active contributions in our response to climate change.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 10 June 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138 of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session should be elected from among the African States.

In that connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of African States for the month of February 2009 that the Group has endorsed His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session.

Please allow me to congratulate my brother His Excellency Mr. Ali Treki, the Minister for African Union Affairs of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on his election as the President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

I know that Mr. Treki assumes this honour with the same passion and determination that have inspired my presidency. I am sure that his presidency will continue to press for the revitalization of this body as it seeks to restore its authority and leadership on the world stage during these perilous times.

I am reminded that our tenure in this position is brief. I assure the President-elect that I will be, with great pleasure, available to assist him and his team in any way he sees fit as he prepares for next September, so that the urgent work before us can proceed seamlessly into the next session. I trust that all of us will assist our Libyan brother as he prepares to assume the honour and responsibility of the Assembly presidency.

I now invite His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session, to take the floor.

Mr. Treki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to express my thanks and appreciation for the confidence that the General Assembly has placed in my country and in my person by electing me by acclamation President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. My special thanks are due to the African Group, which

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supported my nomination and provided me with encouragement. It is indeed my honour to represent the Group by assuming this important position.

This choice is a tribute to my country, its people and its leader. It is also an expression of appreciation for Libya's commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and its effective contribution to the realization of international peace and security, especially on my continent of Africa. However, at the same time, it places a moral commitment on our shoulders to further advancing the achievement of the United Nations purposes. For my part, I will make every possible effort to achieve those goals, in consultation and cooperation with all Member States.

I am truly happy to find myself once again among a large number of friends. I worked with many of them for many years in this Hall, and I will be honoured indeed to work with them again for an entire year.

I would like to thank my dear friend, President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for the frank and sincere way in which he has shared his experience with me. Undoubtedly, his cooperation with and advice to me during the transitional period will prove most important as I conduct the work of the sixty-fourth session. I take this opportunity to commend his efforts in leading the General Assembly to respond effectively to a large number of pressing issues.

I wish also to express my happiness with the welcome and encouragement bestowed upon me by my dear friend, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whom I have had the pleasure to know and whose admirable character I have appreciated for many years. I admire his leadership of the United Nations, his perseverance and his quick responses to the exigencies of urgent matters. I wish to reassure him that I will cooperate with him and benefit from his experience in seeking the best ways to address the priority issues facing the United Nations.

The world has gone through many cruel and bitter stages, including a phase of colonialism and slavery, which embodies oppression in its cruelest forms. The peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America were the victims. Successive wars were fought, chief among which were the First and Second World Wars. The peoples of small and large countries alike paid the highest price for those wars in terms of destruction, material losses and hundreds of thousands of human lives lost.

Following the Second World War, the peoples of the world saw a glimmer of hope in the establishment of the United Nations as an end to their suffering and the beginning of a new era of security, peace, justice, equality and development. An era of decolonization and independence dawned for small nations, with the United Nations playing a major role in its achievement. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, ushering in a new era focused on respect for human individuals, their dignity and right to life. Despite the defects and shortcomings of the United Nations, it deserves to be commended for its many achievements, especially in the humanitarian field.

The countries that emerged victorious from the Second World War had the lion's share in leading the establishment of the United Nations. The Charter was drafted to give the victorious countries rights not accorded to other States. This represented a major defect, especially with respect to the Security Council. The world, however, has evolved considerably since then; criteria have changed and a multipolar structure has emerged. It is no longer possible for the United Nations, with a membership of 192 countries, to remain the Organization it was when it had only 50 Members. The need to reform the United Nations system has emerged, especially vis-à-vis the role of the General Assembly and the need to grant it full authority to shoulder its responsibilities in the march of human progress.

With the emergence of the United Nations, the peoples of the world believed that they would enjoy peace and prosperity. Regrettably, however, wars proliferated, although they have been confined mostly to the regional and local levels. Competition among the major Powers has played a role in their inflammation. Thousands, if not millions, of victims have fallen all over the world. Military expenditure has increased, and military budgets have risen into the trillions of dollars. The small countries have felt obliged to increase their military capabilities at the expense of their development and the welfare of their peoples. Weapons of mass destruction have proliferated and the entire world has felt threatened. Although the major Powers, which possess nuclear weapons, have called for disarmament, they have not set a good example for other countries by taking the initiative to dismantle their own weapons of mass destruction. Hence, the call

to discard weapons of mass destruction has been met with barely any response.

The exorbitant amounts spent on arms could have been spent to reduce poverty, fight diseases and assist poor peoples in the field of development. Millions of people suffer from hunger; hundreds of millions are deprived of their right to education and suffer from disease, with no access to medicine. Poverty rates have risen, with repercussions for small nations that have suffered greater instability as they experience military coups and rebel movements, hampering their development and increasing their torment. The world can enjoy no peace, being divided between poor and rich, with the gap between the two widening. Furthermore, peace cannot prevail in the world while some peoples live under foreign occupation and suffer the consequences of racism. Peace can prevail only within a framework of justice and respect for human rights regardless of one's religion, race, colour or nationality.

The time has come for us to understand that all wars are wrong and sinful. We should work together to avert war through the administration of justice in order to safeguard human lives and preserve human dignity. The only war worth relentlessly fighting, with the participation of all, is that against fatal diseases, poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

Undoubtedly, many challenges lie ahead that we must make a concerted effort to meet through the United Nations. United Nations reform in all its aspects — especially reform of the Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly — must continue to be one of our priorities. We should make every effort to achieve it as soon as possible. Indeed, the realization of peace and security through the administration of justice and putting an end to wars is a core purpose of the United Nations. It is a responsibility to be shouldered by all Member States.

Furthermore, we have no choice but to continue to address the issue of climate change firmly and effectively through cooperation among Member States in order to make the General Assembly an effective instrument for successfully advancing the current negotiations on climate change and for establishing a new framework for our future work based on our achievements to date and our envisaged goals.

The world financial and economic crisis remains of major concern and requires greater effort in the search for new, effective methods to tackle the crisis, mitigate its impact and achieve sustainable economic growth and development, taking into account the negative effects of the crisis on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in our continent, Africa.

It is imperative that we stand firmly for the realization of human rights. Such an undertaking cannot be achieved solely through rhetorical statements, but requires the provision of the basic necessities for a dignified life, such as food, medicine, clean drinking water, educational and health services and the means to fight dangerous diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. We can do so only through solidarity and joint coordination so as to create a better world in which all enjoy peace, security, and a decent standard of living, and in which the basic rights and freedom of all are respected.

As I have been chosen to preside over the next session of the General Assembly, I would like to assure all Members that I will be at their disposal in our joint effort to enhance and strengthen the United Nations and its bodies. I count on the assistance and cooperation of every Member of the United Nations and will not align myself with any party or group. My only alignment will be with justice, security, peace and the common interests of the entire international community. I will cooperate with the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the common good.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I congratulate His Excellency Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Instead of welcoming him, I should really welcome him back. Our new President is already very familiar with the United Nations. He has already served three times as his country's United Nations Ambassador, most recently in 2003. His other diplomatic assignments have placed him at the heart of the United Nations agenda, and, in his current capacity as Libya's Minister for African Union Affairs, he has been working on pressing matters of mutual concern to the United Nations and the African Union, including Darfur.

That wide-ranging diplomatic experience will be invaluable as he presides over the General Assembly. From climate change to hunger, from the economic

crisis to the urgent need to reach the Millennium Development Goals, the Assembly will be challenged to forge new levels of international cooperation to solve our common problems. My own experience tells me that the Assembly can rise to that challenge. Members will recall that I served as Chef de Cabinet to the President of the General Assembly in 2001 and 2002. That session convened at a time of international upheaval. Despite the turmoil, Member States were able to achieve consensus on many important issues.

Now, as we face new problems and threats, Minister Treki's leadership will be crucial if the Assembly is to respond with unified action. We must also keep adapting and improving our Organization to better live up to the ideas of the Charter and the demands of the times.

I congratulate our current President, His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, on his valuable contribution, and I anticipate a smooth transition to the new leadership of the General Assembly. I look forward to working closely with the President-elect and the entire membership towards our shared goal of a more effective United Nations so that we can better serve the people who need us most.

I congratulate the President-elect once again on his election and I wish him every success as he takes up his formidable responsibilities.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Swaziland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland): I would like to say a few words with the understanding that the issue will be dealt with in our next formal meeting. On behalf of the African Group, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Gabon on the loss of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba. We also pray that God Almighty will reach out to the family in this hour of bereavement. May his soul rest in peace.

It is my singular honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the African Group on yet another day of triumph of the international system. I have the further honour to extend my warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, a true son of Africa, on his election by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

The election of Mr. Treki marks the true commitment of his country, Libya, and, by extension, of the African continent, to the United Nations system and to the virtues of multilateralism. His richly decorated experience and highly illustrious career in the international setting speak for themselves. He has been a true soldier in the struggle for the common good, firm in his resolve to carry out his duties with the utmost integrity. The fact that Mr. Treki has served in New York at various points in time is testimony that his election could not have come at a better time. Mr. Treki's experience will be placed on a higher level of engagement, and I trust that the principles of multilateralism and solemn commitment to international collectivity will be given added impetus.

The President-elect has come at a time of immense anxiety in the world. Economies are dwindling, financial systems are crumbling and poverty levels are reaching record highs. Solutions are being sought through different perspectives at all levels of decision-making and many times there are different perspectives on how best to solve our most common problems. Generally, the plot is thickening. This is a time of reckoning. It is definitely not a time to consider self-interest. In that regard, we have full confidence that the President-elect will work through these challenges with confidence, tenacity and fortitude.

On behalf of the African Group, I would like to reach out to Mr. Treki and assure him of the full cooperation of the Group as he carries out his day-to-day duties. In the same vein, I trust that other formations in the United Nations will do the same, with a view to ensuring the best cooperation that can be achieved. For this reason, the African Group wishes Mr. Treki all success as he navigates the troubled waters of our challenging world and reaffirms its active participation in all initiatives that seek to better the lives of our people, whom we represent.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States and to congratulate the President-elect of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam

Treki, Minister for African Union Affairs and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Chairman of the African Union Executive Council and representative of the Group of African States. His election by acclamation today is a clear reflection of our full confidence in his ability to lead our work and confirmation of his vast experience and exceptional qualifications, which will enhance his leadership of the General Assembly at its forthcoming session.

The sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly will convene in September 2009, at a time when the international community is facing new challenges and difficulties resulting from the aggravated global financial and economic crisis, in addition to other ongoing issues and challenges which hold great importance for the international community. Those include, inter alia, reform of the United Nations, in particular reform of the Security Council and its relationship with the General Assembly, climate change, food security, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the eradication of poverty and disease. These raise considerable obstacles to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. They are all issues we will continue to address during the sixty-fourth session.

The Asian Group is fully confident that the President-elect, His Excellency Mr. Ali Treki, has the necessary multidimensional experience and qualifications to successfully lead Member States through the important and complex issues they are facing and to maintain the momentum in order to attain the main objectives of this body: lasting peace, security and prosperity for all the peoples of the world. I wish to assure the President-elect that the Asian Group will extend its full support to him as he discharges his duties as President of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We wish him every success in his new mission.

Finally, on behalf of the Asian Group, I take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the current President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his tireless efforts and commitment during the sixty-third session. His extensive skill, wise leadership and dedication have been essential for the success of the current session of the General Assembly during this important and sensitive phase of its work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Tašovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to extend sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on his election as President of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session. The election of Mr. Ali Treki as President of the Assembly for its sixty-fourth session is not only recognition of his outstanding personal qualities and experience, but also of his unrelenting efforts to make our world a better place.

We are fully convinced that in assuming the complexity and the responsibility of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, which we have entrusted to him, his political and diplomatic experience and leadership skills will contribute to successful management of a number of important and vital ongoing reforms that have become imperative to the future of the Organization and of the international community.

On behalf of the Eastern European Group, I would like to assure Mr. Treki that our Group stands ready to support his initiatives and assist him in all his undertakings to further strengthen the United Nations and to attain the objectives set out in the United Nations Charter, within a framework of transparency and full respect for all views and positions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to express our most sincere congratulations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister for African Union Affairs of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on his election by acclamation to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki is an experienced diplomat who has served in many posts of importance for his country's international relations, including at the United Nations.

For that reason, we are convinced that his leadership and negotiating skills will contribute to

achieving major advances for peace and security, development, international cooperation, respect and promotion of human rights, reform of the United Nations and protection of the environment, among other prominent issues on the agenda of the sixty-fourth session.

In addition, in the context of the unprecedented financial and economic crisis confronting the world today, and given the flaws and gaps in international financial governance, our regional group believes that it is important and urgently needed for the General Assembly to take a leading and proactive role in finding a solution to this crisis and in international economic affairs.

Developing countries, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean, bear the burden of a crisis for which they are not responsible, but which nevertheless is leading to major setbacks to the economic and financial stability of those countries and jeopardizing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In this context, our regional group trusts that the President-elect of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, will rise to the challenge of the circumstances and guide us appropriately in navigating these and other challenges that we will face during the forthcoming session.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to extend sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the current Minister for African Union Affairs of his country on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Mr. Treki has served his country and the African region with distinction and will bring extensive political experience to the leadership of the General Assembly — leadership that will build confidence among Member States and different groupings. This will be important for bringing the reform process forward and in dealing with a host of challenging issues facing the international community today.

We look forward to continuing to work with incumbent President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann and will assist to the best of our endeavours in ensuring a smooth transition until our new President takes over in September. We assure the President-elect of our full support in his important duties of serving Member States and we wish him every success in doing so.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain, who will speak on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I welcome the opportunity to address the Assembly today on behalf of the Arab Group to warmly congratulate the President-elect of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister for African Union Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and representative of the African Group, which has put its full confidence in him to represent them in this Assembly. The members of the Arab Group are also proud of the fact that Mr. Treki is part of their Group, as his country is at the crossroads of two worlds: the African and the Arab. We believe that his election today will serve to further strengthen these links.

Mr. Treki's election by acclamation of the Member States demonstrates their full confidence in his abilities and in his lengthy political and diplomatic experience as a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and in other important positions that amply qualify him for his new post.

The upcoming session of the General Assembly will be held at a major turning point. The reform process of the United Nations, especially the reform of the Security Council and its relationship with the General Assembly, among others, continues to be the focus of major interest for all Member States. This reform is, as I said, a turning point in the history of our international Organization, which faces crucial challenges for the future, especially the need to promote international peace and security, including the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East through the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international resolutions. We will also have to face other challenges, especially the international economic crisis, climate change, food security, reduction in nuclear stockpiles and the fight against poverty and disease, all of which are of great

concern to humankind and call for our unrelenting efforts.

The key role that the President of the General Assembly can play in promoting the agenda of the international community will enable us to respond to all of these challenges. He is well prepared to fulfil his noble mission thanks to his lengthy experience, his leadership and his clear vision, qualities that we have witnessed in Mr. Treki throughout the long decades of his international diplomatic career. We trust that the President-elect will give all of these issues the greatest attention and will direct the work of the sixty-fourth session with vigour thanks to his in-depth knowledge of all of these issues and his wealth of experience. These traits make him well able to address these issues at the international, regional and national levels.

The Arab Group will fully support the President-elect in the fulfilment of his role as head of an Assembly that represents all Member States. We thank the President of the sixty-third session of the Assembly for his tireless efforts throughout the session. His wisdom and his ability were the key to achieving positive results in recent months.

The President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the sixty-fourth regular session

The President: As announced in the *Journal*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-fourth session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the States members of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name has been drawn will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by lot by the Secretary-General, Cambodia was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-fourth session.

The President: I wish to inform members that, immediately after the adjournment of this meeting, consecutive meetings of the First Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), and the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Committees will be held in this Hall to elect the members of their respective Bureaux.

Thereafter, the General Assembly will hold its 87th plenary meeting, to elect the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.87

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

87th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 10 June 2009, 12.15 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Announcement regarding the results of the election of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform members that the following representatives, whom I wish to congratulate, have been elected Chairpersons of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and are accordingly members of the General Committee for that session: First Committee, Mr. José Luis Cancela of Uruguay; Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar; Second Committee, Mr. Park In-kook of the Republic of Korea; Third Committee, Mr. Normans Penke of Latvia; Fifth Committee, Mr. Peter Maurer of Switzerland; and Sixth Committee, Mr. Mourad Benmehidi of Algeria.

Agenda item 6

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we shall now proceed to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for its sixty-fourth session.

All members of the General Assembly are eligible in this election, except those already represented in the General Committee, namely, those countries whose representatives have been elected to the presidency of the General Assembly or to the chairmanships of the Main Committees for the sixty-fourth session.

In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session shall be elected according to the following pattern: five representatives from African States, five representatives from Asian States, one representative from Eastern European States, three representatives from Latin American and Caribbean States, two representatives from Western European and other States, and representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly by secret ballot will be dispensed with when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

We shall proceed accordingly.

I shall now read out the names of the endorsed candidates.

African States: Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, South Africa and the Sudan.

Asian States: India, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal and Turkmenistan.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

09-36488 (E)

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Eastern European States: Slovenia.

Latin American and Caribbean States: Barbados, El Salvador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Western European and other States: Belgium and Finland.

Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, I declare those candidates elected, in addition to the representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

The following States have therefore been elected to vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for its sixty-fourth session: Barbados, Belgium, Cameroon, China, El Salvador, Finland, France, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, the Sudan, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the States that have been elected to vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for its sixty-fourth session.

Having elected the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees and the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-fourth session, the General Committee of the General Assembly for its sixty-fourth session has thus been fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

Agenda item 104 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(a) Election of twenty members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/312/Add.1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

Allow me to remind members that, at its 73rd plenary meeting, held on 22 December 2008, the General Assembly elected 17 members of the Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2009. Members will also recall that, by its decision 2006/201 D, of 30 November 2006, the Economic and Social Council postponed the nomination of one member from Western European and other States for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2007.

In that regard, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/63/312/Add.1. As indicated in that document, the Economic and Social Council nominated Israel for election by the General Assembly to fill the outstanding vacancy on the Committee for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2009.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare Israel elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on 10 June 2009 and expiring on 31 December 2009?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Regarding the remaining vacancies from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on them upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of Member States from that region.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 104.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.88

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

88th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 June 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late President of the Gabonese Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, who passed away on Monday, 8 June 2009.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Gabon to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Gabon and to the bereaved family of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I join the Government and people of Gabon in mourning His Excellency President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba. I worked with President Bongo on a number of conflict situations in Africa. I wish to recall in particular the important role played by the late President in attempts to resolve crises in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I also recall with great appreciation the contributions that he made to the establishment of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, which has been a force for stability in the subregion. I am also grateful for his enduring commitment to the United Nations and his efforts to strengthen cooperation between the Organization and the African Union and Central Africa's subregional organizations.

President Bongo's understanding of the many complex and delicate challenges that we face proved consistently useful to all of us involved in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace consolidation in Africa.

I offer my sincere condolences to the President's family, as well as to the Government and the people of Gabon at this time of sadness and loss.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Swaziland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland): On behalf of the Group of African States and the people of Africa and on my own behalf, I stand here today to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of the Gabonese Republic on the sad loss of an eminent African leader, President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba. The same condolences go to his family, and I would like to assure them that they are not alone in this darkest hour.

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The life of President Bongo has to be celebrated, for it was eventful and fruitful. He has left behind a legacy that will linger for many years to come. The simple truth is that he made a difference at home and abroad. He sought to improve the lives of the ordinary Gabonese in an unassuming way. The economic advancement and infrastructural development of Gabon are owed to the astuteness of President Bongo.

He is one leader who succeeded in keeping Gabon peaceful in a sea of wars and sporadic conflicts. That is not an easy task to achieve. Few can forget his unrelenting efforts as a mediator and peacemaker in African conflicts. The people of Central Africa can marvel at his steadfastness in resolving internal conflicts that have marred the countries there. His active participation in solving the political crises in the neighbouring Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of the Congo will forever be engraved on our minds. It reveals a man who juggled his responsibilities well. A man as thoughtful as the President has left behind a country that strove in peace in his time and will continue to do so in the future.

President Bongo Ondimba's environmental efforts in Gabon also deserve affirmative acclaim. A man who described himself as an ecologist by birthright, he orchestrated a reforestation policy, with the protection of animal and plant species at the core of his priorities. Having earmarked 13 national parks for the country and willing to go further, he was a man who strove to strike a good balance between humankind and our mother Earth. It goes without saying that he was in sync with international initiatives from nature conservation to the broader international agenda. That confirmed his firm belief in the Kyoto Protocol, which he described as important to human existence.

It is, as it were, not only a loss for his family and his country, but it is also an incalculable loss for the African continent. His contribution to the African cause was tremendous. Gabon was able to sacrifice and contribute positively to the wider African good, mostly through the African Union. Having said that, Africa has lost a father and dean of presidents, whose experience and diplomatic skills will be sorely missed. May his soul rest in peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): As Chairman of the Group of Asian States, I would like to extend my thanks to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this special meeting to pay tribute to His Excellency President Omar Bongo Ondimba, late President of Gabon, who died on 8 June 2009.

On behalf of the Asian Group, I wish to express our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the friendly country of Gabon on the death of their President, who was called the dean of African presidents. For more than four decades, he dedicated his life to continuously serving the causes of his country and his people and to building peace and stability in his country. He undertook mediation and other initiatives to try to contain many of the emerging crises throughout the African continent.

In expressing our support for all of the efforts undertaken by the people of Gabon, we wish to emphasize our full solidarity with them as they face this difficult and sad time. We wish them all success in consolidating constitutionality and democracy in their country and stability and future prosperity. The Group of Asian States extends its deepest condolences to them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Tašovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): It is my sad duty to address the Assembly in my capacity as the Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States on the occasion of the death of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic. With deep sorrow on behalf of the Group, I would like to convey our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the late President and to the people and Government of the Gabonese Republic.

At the same time, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to pay tribute to President Bongo Ondimba as a great statesman who served his country well for more than forty years. As one of the longest serving heads of State in the world,

we pay tribute to him for his outstanding leadership, personal qualities, wisdom and experience.

As President of the Gabonese Republic from 1967 until his death, President Bongo Ondimba had many achievements and contributions. He will always be remembered as the President who brought peace and stability to the country and whose tireless efforts, steely determination and guidance contributed to the welfare of his nation and country. He was a President who served his noble nation with pride and without fear of outstanding challenges. The entire nation has lost a great man of strong vision and leadership.

Today, as we mourn his death and share the sadness of the friendly nation of Gabon, the late President will not only be remembered as the great statesman and leader from an African country, but as one of the most prominent and dominating figures in the political life of the Gabonese Republic and in the African region. Africa has lost one of its great leaders and we pay tribute to President Bongo Ondimba for serving his people with dignity and honour.

Allow me to call on the Permanent Mission of the Gabonese Republic to transmit, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, sincere condolences to the family of the late President and the people and Government of the Gabonese Republic. We are convinced that the people of Gabon have the strength and resilience to persist on the path of peace and progress and to continue his legacy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of El Salvador, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, to pay tribute today to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic. I wish also to convey our most sincere condolences to the family of President Bongo, to the Government and the people of Gabon and to the whole African nation on this deeply felt loss. The Latin American and Caribbean Group joins in extending solidarity to the African Group in order to pay heartfelt tribute this morning to a remarkable leader who succeeded in transcending his national borders and played an active and decisive role in the quest for peace and stability, not only in the Central African region, but also in other parts of the continent.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group recognizes that the unquestioned contributions of President Bongo to the prosperity, peace and stability of his people and of the region are in harmony with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. For that reason, the Latin American and Caribbean Group wishes today to pay this simple but sincere posthumous tribute to his memory. President Omar Bongo Ondimba, may you rest in peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of Norway, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Group of Western European and other States.

It is with sorrow that we mourn the passing of His Excellency Mr. Omar Bongo, late President of the Gabonese Republic. I should like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Gabon, and to the family of the late President. At this difficult time, our thoughts are with the people of Gabon, whom the President served with commitment and with honour.

President Bongo was a charismatic leader whose contribution to the economic development of Africa will be long remembered. He worked tirelessly on a number of mediations in the region and made a great contribution to the standing of Gabon in the world, as can be attested by all the members of our Group.

We all hope that the Government and the people of Gabon will overcome this moment and continue to make progress towards the further prosperity of their country.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak in her capacity as representative of the host country.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): In sadness we mourn today the passing of His Excellency Omar Bongo Ondimba. The United States expresses its sincere condolences to the family of the late President and to the people and Government of the Gabonese

Republic. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult moment.

Africa has lost a leader who was dedicated to the cause of national and regional peace. Over a long career extending four decades, President Bongo used his influence to help resolve conflict throughout the continent of Africa. He consistently emphasized the importance of seeking compromise and made protecting the national treasures of Gabon a priority. His work in conservation is an important part of his legacy.

President Bongo played a key role in developing and shaping the strong bilateral relationship that exists between Gabon and the United States. His many accomplishments will be remembered with respect. May the soul of the late President rest in peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you most warmly for having convened this special tribute to the memory of the late Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic.

On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I should like to extend to our friends, the Government and the people of Gabon, as well as to the Group of African States, our most heartfelt condolences on the passing of President Bongo.

The President devoted his life to the service and development of his country and the restoration of cordial, cooperative and friendly relations not only with African States but with most States of the world. He was a friend to all. He was called the dean of African presidents. He was often turned to for his great wisdom and wealth of experience in international relations. He made a personal contribution to deepening Gabon's bilateral relationships.

The late President played a leading role in the resolution of conflicts which devastated the African continent — disputes among countries and civil conflicts whose resolution required the aid and assistance of men of good faith and dedication, such as President Bongo. The mediation efforts of President Bongo were aimed at reconciliation and bringing peace to these areas of conflict and hotbeds of tension. He also served the causes of justice, rights and law beyond the boundaries of the African continent, in particular in the context of the Palestinian question.

President Bongo will forever be remembered by the people of Gabon, by Muslim and African countries and by leaders around the world. In paying tribute to the memory of the late President, the Group of Arab States should like to voice its hopes for the prosperity of the friendly Gabonese people and to wish every success to the next President of Gabon.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Onanga M. Ndiaye (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): At this time of deep mourning for the people of Gabon and for all of Africa, we wish to express our profound gratitude to the representatives of the various regional groups and to the Member States who have taken the floor during this plenary meeting to pay such a vibrant tribute to the late President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

We should also like to thank you, Mr. President, as well as the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the numerous representatives of States and international organizations, for their friendship, sympathy, compassion and solidarity towards the people and the Government of Gabon since the passing of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

As the Assembly is aware, the late President devoted his political life not only to the development of our beloved Gabon, but also to the causes of peace and security in Africa. Indeed, his role in seeking resolution to numerous crisis and conflict situations on the continent is unanimously acknowledged, as many speakers have justly recalled today. His vision of dialogue and peace will continue to guide the diplomacy of the Gabonese Republic.

As we enter a period of transition, Gabon intends to uphold a scrupulous respect for constitutional legality — the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms — in order to preserve the national peace and unity that were so dear to the late President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

I cannot conclude my remarks without thanking you, Mr. President, for having organized this tribute to our late President.

Agenda item 41

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/63/152 and Add.1)

Draft decision (A/63/L.73)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/812) on the progress made and the challenges remaining in the global response against AIDS. We are encouraged by the good news. Financial resources to combat HIV increased in 2008. We also continue to make progress in providing HIV treatment for people who until recently lacked access to it. More sero-positive pregnant women are using services to prevent the transmission of the virus to their babies. More children than ever are receiving treatment.

Nevertheless, we should recall that in 2006 the General Assembly pledged to achieve universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010. The deadline that we set for ourselves is now only 18 months away. Will we be able to meet it?

The latest information and research reveal our shortcomings as a global community. There are 29 million people throughout the world who need and still lack HIV medications. Roughly two out of three HIV-positive pregnant women do not receive services to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The rate of new HIV infections is greater than that of the expansion of access to treatment.

Some aspects of the global response to AIDS are of special concern. We are thinking of our afflicted brothers and sisters in Africa. That continent alone is home to 22 million people living with HIV. In 2007, three out of four AIDS deaths worldwide occurred in Africa.

We have begun to build the systems that are needed to sustain HIV treatment and prevention services over the next generation. It should be emphasized, however, that we have only just begun. In the absence of a cure, we must enhance treatment and, what is more difficult, prevention campaigns. However, the effectiveness of our efforts will ultimately depend upon promoting justice and care in our societies through policies and programmes that empower the most vulnerable people. We face an enormous challenge but, with commitment and determination, we can rise to it. We know that that is also a moral and ethical imperative.

Unfortunately, the history of AIDS illustrates our failure to serve and protect the most vulnerable. Currently, women make up 60 per cent of all people living with HIV in Africa. The right of women to own or inherit property is still unrecognized in many parts of the world, condemning many women affected by AIDS to destitution or worse. Many women and girls continue to be subject to gender-based violence, increasing their risk of and vulnerability to contracting HIV. We cannot fail women in our response to AIDS.

We must also do more for our children. An estimated 370,000 children under the age of 15 became infected with HIV in 2007. HIV-infected children are less likely than HIV-positive adults to receive life-saving therapies. Approximately 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, but fewer than one in six households in which those orphans live received any form of assistance in 2007.

Unfortunately, in many countries there are still laws that hinder access to critical life-saving services for the groups most at risk for HIV, such as men who have sex with men, drug users and sex workers. Such laws contribute to the stigma and discrimination that violate the dignity and human rights of those most in need of our understanding and solidarity.

The global community's pledge to achieve universal access by the end of next year is an encouraging expression of global solidarity with the individuals, households and communities that are suffering most from the effects of this disease. The question today is whether we will keep the promises we have made.

People living with HIV/AIDS are now at greater risk as a result of the global financial and economic crisis that is affecting all the world's economies. I fear that that crisis is forcing many Governments to resign themselves to cutting programmes and lowering expectations. Inevitably, people are questioning the feasibility of our ambitious global goals during a time of economic crisis. The recently declared H1N1 flu pandemic adds a new level of complexity and further

tests our collective will. But it is precisely when times are difficult that our true values and the sincerity of our commitment are most clearly evident.

Even as many countries are indicating their intention of reducing funding for AIDS programmes, we must remind Governments and the international community that the world has the resources to mount the kind of AIDS response to which we have committed. If we allow cutbacks now, we will face even higher costs and greater human suffering in the future.

As the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS recently reminded us, the funds needed to achieve universal access represent a miniscule fraction of the sums that have been spent this year on economic stimulus measures. We continue to tolerate an obscene increase in arms expenditures, which last year totalled almost $1.5 trillion globally, an increase of 45 per cent since 1999. By contrast, for countries to reach the specific AIDS targets they have set, an investment of only $25 billion will be required in 2010, which is only $11.3 billion more than are available today.

As decisions are made in the coming months on budgetary and policy priorities at the global and national levels, it is my fervent hope that we will keep in mind the enormous human dimensions of the AIDS epidemic and its important consequences for development. Our investments today to ensure universal access will yield dividends for generations to come. It will help improve maternal and child health, promote empowerment of women and reduce poverty.

As we move closer to our goal of universal access by 2010, and as the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals is just around the corner, let us renew our resolve to put people first in the decisions we make. The goal of universal access is a goal that can be achieved. For the sake of humanity — our humanity — it is a goal that we must achieve.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: This meeting comes during an intense period for global health, a top priority. Yesterday, we convened a forum on advancing global health in the face of a crisis. I thank many of those here for being part of that effort.

Last month in Geneva, I met once again with members of the United Nations System HIV-Positive Staff Group. They were mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, colleagues and friends, living and working with dignity and facing adversity with courage. I heard stories of hope and resolve. I said something I tell people everywhere: HIV is not about "us versus them". It is about everyone. There is no "them", only us, together.

That meeting was a reminder of what brings us here today: the stories, struggles, real lives, difficulties and triumphs of women and men the world over. That is the essence of my report before the Assembly (A/63/812). It provides an update on developments in the AIDS response and looks forward to the challenges ahead.

Three years ago, leaders gathered here to forge a landmark commitment. They pledged their determination to achieve the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention services, treatment, care and support by 2010. We are seeing encouraging progress in that global effort. I would like to point to four promising areas.

First, on commitment, more than 110 countries have established clear national targets for universal access. Many countries are making headway towards these targets, and in some cases have already reached them.

Secondly, on prevention, in the 14 African countries surveyed we have seen a decrease in the percentage of young pregnant women living with HIV. Nine countries have achieved the 25 per cent reduction in HIV prevalence called for in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Thirdly, on treatment, over a period of just five years there has been a tenfold increase in the provision of antiretroviral drugs to those in need. That has contributed to the first decline in the number of annual AIDS deaths since the epidemic was first recognized nearly 30 years ago.

Fourthly, on resources, financing for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries has continued to increase, reaching $13.7 billion in 2008. Building on the momentum, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have started leveraging AIDS funding to strengthen health systems in some of the neediest places. This shows what global solidarity, cooperation and commitment can achieve.

Yet there are still nearly five new infections for every two people put on treatment. Now is not the time to falter. The economic crisis should not be an excuse to abandon commitments — it should be an impetus to make the right investments that will yield benefits for generations to come.

A vigorous and effective response to the AIDS epidemic is integrally linked to meeting global commitments to reducing poverty, preventing hunger, lowering childhood mortality and protecting the health and well-being of women. But to achieve the goal of universal access, barriers to progress need to be overcome, not just in battling the disease, but also in confronting obstacles that society puts in the way.

The fight against AIDS also requires us to attack diseases of the human spirit — prejudice, discrimination and stigma. The most recent estimates show that about one third of this Organization's Member States still have no law in place to prohibit HIV-related discrimination. In many countries where such laws exist, they are inadequately enforced.

At the same time, legal frameworks institutionalize discrimination against groups most at risk and against vulnerable populations. In recent years, a growing number of countries have taken steps to criminalize HIV transmission. In theory, that has been done to prevent the spread of infection. In practice, it has done the opposite, reducing the effectiveness of HIV prevention efforts by reinforcing the stigma. Such measures send the message that people living with HIV are a danger to society. We must instead encourage tolerance, compassion and inclusion. I call on all Governments to review their legal frameworks to ensure compliance with the human rights principles on which a sound AIDS response is based. That is not solely a medical or scientific challenge. It is a moral challenge, too.

Let us find the wisdom and courage for bold action on all those fronts. That is the only way to address this challenge in all its complexity and breadth.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health of South Africa, who will also speak on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

Mr. Motsoaledi (South Africa): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, South Africa. We, too, wish to join in paying homage to the people of Gabon on the passing of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba. We stand with them at this moment of grief.

SADC aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Swaziland on behalf of the Group of African States. We thank the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS", contained in document A/63/812. SADC wishes to support the Secretary-General's recommendations for accelerating progress towards universal access, and we reaffirm our commitment to moving towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the SADC region, carries the heaviest burden of HIV and AIDS in the world. While underdevelopment, poverty, various forms of inequality and other structural determinants of disease make many people in the region vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, this pandemic poses a major barrier to the attainment of our overarching objectives of sustainable and equitable economic growth and social and economic development towards poverty eradication. That vicious cycle has the potential to undermine regional efforts to attain many of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In recognition of the need to combat the pandemic, SADC members States have continued to implement regional and internationally agreed commitments on HIV and AIDS, with the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the 2003 Declaration of SADC Heads of State on HIV and AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS being the reference points for regional activities.

SADC member States have continued to work together to develop and implement common strategies and programmes to address HIV and AIDS. Those programmes and strategies are informed by and respond to epidemiological information available on

the magnitude, nature and dynamics of the epidemic in the region. The responses of individual countries and, indeed, at the district and local levels are in most cases tailored appropriately. We welcome the technical support provided by United Nations agencies on helping us in getting to know and understand our epidemics better.

In line with our commitment to the implementation of those global commitments, most SADC member States have developed national strategic plans, policies and programmes aimed at preventing the spread of HIV, mitigating its impact and providing care and support to those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. In some member States, policies and legal frameworks have been amended to address issues relating to stigma and discrimination. In some instances, there are laws to support the compulsory testing of sexual offenders, and discussions are under way to address issues of marginalized groups.

SADC has developed an HIV and AIDS database as a platform for sharing information and a tool to empower member States to manage research entries in their own countries. A common research agenda for the region has also been developed. On behalf of SADC, I wish to mention that research priorities include research on basic science, vaccine and microbicide development, and on operational research. It is our position that even though much has been done, with some encouraging outcomes to date, more robust prevention methods are needed in order to turn the tide against the epidemic in the region. SADC thus wishes to underscore the importance of international cooperation, in particular technical assistance, as well as access to research funding, to enable member States to build research capacity and carry out further research to develop an effective vaccine to better understand the drivers of the epidemic in order to substantially increase the magnitude of the emerging positive outcomes towards an AIDS-free SADC.

The progress being made in preventing HIV infection among youth, with some member States reporting HIV prevalence rates among young people, is encouraging. In most countries, there is convincing evidence to suggest that the epidemic is stabilizing. Behavioural studies undertaken in some member States indicate increased condom usage. However, the provision of condoms for the prevention of HIV remains below that required. The availability of voluntary HIV counselling, testing and antiretroviral therapy treatment is being scaled up throughout the region, but still remains far below that required to meet the estimated need. With the assistance of the Regional Office for Africa of the World Health Organization, the region is working on the best approach to translate the research findings on the effectiveness of male circumcision as an HIV-prevention tool into policy and programmes. SADC countries are at different stages of that process.

SADC is thus encouraged by the increased availability of funding for HIV and AIDS activities, and we are fully supportive of the Secretary-General's call to increase annual funding to $25 billion by 2010 in order to achieve national targets for universal coverage. We wish to appeal to the donor community to ensure the predictability of funding and that funding should be consistent with national priorities and programmes.

Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups should be part of the national response to HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support. SADC is concerned by the increased feminization of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Again, even as gender inequalities make women more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, the pandemic reinforces gender inequalities. While women and girls are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, they bear the disproportionate burden of care and support for those infected and affected by the disease. The empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of violence against women have to be part of the response mechanism for combating HIV/AIDS. It is thus important to strengthen initiatives that would increase the capacities of women and girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection.

This approach should include, among other things, programmes of early childhood development, keeping girls in school, changing cultural and religious practices that put girls and women at risk, providing health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services, voluntary counselling and testing, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and equal access to good quality tertiary education for men and women. In this regard, SADC welcomes the agreed conclusions of the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, and underscores the need to involve men and boys in addressing gender

equality and the empowerment of women in all spheres, including in the context of HIV/AIDS.

We are deeply concerned with the large number of vulnerable children, estimated at around 15 million, 80 per cent of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa. While in SADC children infected and affected by the pandemic pose a major challenge to addressing the HIV/AIDS response, there is a need to have a comprehensive approach in dealing with vulnerable children. This area is one in which cultural and social practices could be enhanced for the protection and care of affected children and households by leveraging the resources and goodwill that communities already have.

We appeal to our partners to be sensitive to these approaches and to assist with technical and organizational skills in approaches that are familiar and acceptable to local people in order to reduce the risk of stigmatizing affected children. A child orphaned through HIV/AIDS and one orphaned through other means are both vulnerable. A number of SADC member States have developed costed national plans for vulnerable children. However, finding the resources required to implement the plans remain a major challenge.

SADC member States respect the rights of all persons to equal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for HIV/AIDS without discrimination. In that light, we encourage the Secretary-General to include in his future reports equal focus on the HIV/AIDS response for other groups, such as persons with disabilities and older persons.

People with disabilities are at particularly increased risk owing to the social and economic inequalities that they face. Thus, ensuring equal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for people with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities, should be an integral part of the HIV/AIDS response.

The same applies in the case of older persons. It is important that statistics further regroup the age brackets, possibly at five-year intervals. Older persons are vulnerable not only because of the burden of caring for orphaned children and the sick; they are also at risk of being infected.

The provision of pertinent information to the community is essential in prevention, treatment, care and support for persons with HIV/AIDS. Despite numerous education and awareness campaigns, many people in the region do not have enough knowledge about the disease. In SADC, we have learned that information communication materials that respond to cultural diversity and local conditions and in local languages ensure the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions.

As we move towards the deadline of 2010, it is imperative that we have adequate data and information to review progress towards the implementation of commitments that we have set for ourselves. In this regard, while we fully support the Secretary-General's call for accountability, we urge the United Nations system to consider this aspect to be one of the weakest links in the regional response and to prioritize technical support in this area, especially for civil society.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming SADC's unequivocal commitment to the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. We reiterate the call for the international community to complement and supplement national efforts through increased funding and debt forgiveness in order to enable the funds to be used for social development, including HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. Because of the scale of the problem in the subregion and, indeed, our commitment and resolve to address this epidemic, we believe that, with appropriate support, SADC will contribute substantially to the realization of the goals of universal access by 2010 and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, who will also speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): It is an honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the opportunity to review the progress made since the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on

HIV/AIDS in 2001 and of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS at the High-level Meeting in 2006. The European Union remains fully committed to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010, and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the specific targets related to HIV/AIDS. These commitments were reiterated in the European Union Agenda for Action on the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in June 2008, and, most recently, in the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on supporting developing countries in coping with the crisis.

The European Union's external actions are guided by the European Programme for Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis through External Action (2007-2011). A midterm review of its progress was recently conducted in consultation with European and African stakeholders with the aim of better defining the response to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Complementary to the Programme for Action, the European Union, in cooperation with its partners, follows the European Commission Communication on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, 2006-2009.

As described in the current report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812), many countries have made significant progress in scaling up efforts towards universal access, including access to antiretroviral therapy and prevention of mother-to-child transmission. However, as the target year of 2010 is approaching, it is clear that the HIV/AIDS pandemic remains a major challenge that calls for sustainable political attention, leadership and a long-term response.

The European Union fully shares the concern expressed that the commitment to HIV prevention remains inadequate, since the pace of new infections is far larger than the number of people who have access or will be able to have access to treatment. Combination prevention strategies should be scaled up. There is an urgent need to step up the development and implementation of comprehensive prevention approaches, including increased access to male and female condoms as well as information, education and awareness-raising, along with continued investment in research and development of new prevention technologies. As there is not just one type of HIV/AIDS epidemic, efforts should be based on the principle of knowing your epidemic, which is a key feature of successful prevention.

It is worrying that basic prevention services and indeed knowledge of the true risks of HIV infection are not available to far too many, particularly the young. We need to acknowledge that, with the current level of effort, our target of universal access to prevention may not be achieved within the time frame we originally set. Focusing national and international efforts on all levels of prevention using existing tools is more important than ever.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union also remains gravely concerned at the lack of effective prevention programmes, which is reflected in the large number of new HIV infections among children and young people, the low level of coverage for services to prevent mother-to-child transmission and the lack of paediatric drugs in many countries. We encourage stronger commitment to support and protect the 15 million children orphaned and affected by HIV/AIDS and to address the social and structural determinants of HIV risk to women. An effective and sustainable solution to fight the feminization of the epidemic is to invest in girls and women: in their education and in improving their health and social status, including ensuring and strengthening their sexual and reproductive health.

To reverse the current trend of feminization, the European Union, within the context of established EU positions has successfully led efforts to strengthen global attention and action to address gender inequality and gender-based violence and abuse, which are drivers of the AIDS pandemic. We call for intensified efforts to safeguard women's and girls' rights, develop effective HIV and AIDS policy programmes and services for women and girls, including those related to sexual and reproductive health rights within the context of the established EU positions, and to support the full involvement of women in planning and decision-making related to HIV strategies and programmes. We are committed to working collectively and individually to support partner countries in implementing strategies for gender equality, women's rights and empowerment and approaches that are effective in engaging women and girls in responding to the AIDS pandemic.

The European Union affirms its strong support for and commitment to the full implementation of the

Cairo Programme of Action, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action agreed at ICPD+5, and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The European Union considers gender equality and the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential principles in the global response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is critically important to reduce the vulnerability of women and adolescent girls to HIV. We also need to prevent and combat stigma and related discrimination against people living with HIV, including travel restrictions.

The European Union emphasizes that HIV-specific restrictions on entry, stay and residence based on HIV status are discriminatory and do not protect public health. The European Union therefore urges all countries to eliminate any restrictions on entry, stay and residence based on HIV status. Furthermore, we reaffirm our strong political support to the Task Team created by UNAIDS and the Global Fund Board on the topic of HIV-related travel restrictions, which aims to eliminate policies and practices that restrict travel of HIV positive people.

We have to overcome legal, regulatory and cultural or other barriers that inhibit access to effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, including medicines, commodities and services for people living with HIV/AIDS and the populations most at risk, including men who have sex with men, sex workers and injecting drug users. People affected by HIV/AIDS should be fully involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of country-defined strategies to confront the disease.

We call for intensified action to promote safer sexual behaviour, including use of male and female condoms and to scale up access by injecting drug users to harm-reduction interventions, including needle and syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy and other drug dependence treatments. Programmes to change risky behaviours, complemented with strong human rights protections, are far more effective in controlling HIV. The consequences of the criminalization of HIV transmission should be taken into consideration.

As the world's largest donor, the European Union has collectively provided a major contribution to the increased resources for the HIV/AIDS response in recent years, including quadrupling its support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The European Union will work further with partner countries through results-based budget support modalities such as the Millennium Development Goals Contracts, the Global Fund and innovative financing mechanisms. We will also work closely with African Governments towards fulfilment of their commitments to allocate 15 per cent of State budgets to health issues, in line with the 2001 Abuja Declaration, through the European Union-Africa Partnership on the Millennium Development Goals.

In a situation of financial and economic crisis, aid effectiveness and the promotion of effective country responses to HIV/AIDS are of even more critical importance. In accordance with the Accra Agenda for Action and the principles of the International Health Partnership and the Three Ones, the European Union will support the development and implementation of single national plans and budgets to ensure a synergy of international and domestic resources for HIV/AIDS policies and the strengthening of health systems and will assist in country-led national plans, including through horizontal technical cooperation.

We applaud the role of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which helped to reinforce universal access as a top priority. It is our common responsibility at the international, regional and national levels to seize this opportunity and to act on our words and commitments to support the development of strategies and effective responses to this HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Swaziland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. At the outset we wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/63/812, entitled "Progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS" and we take note of the recommendations therein. We also take note of the submission of the reports (A/63/152 and Add.1) of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary-General's comments on them. We look forward to the second independent evaluation, mandated by the Joint United

Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board.

The HIV pandemic is the greatest global threat in the world today. Africa is home to just over 10 per cent of the world's population, but it is also home to nearly two thirds of those living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. It has now been more than 25 years since HIV/AIDS emerged and quickly became a global pandemic. Africa has borne and still bears the heaviest burden of HIV/AIDS, both in economic and social development terms. Although a lot has been achieved with regard to the mobilization of needed resources and access to prevention, treatment, care and support, it is nowhere near enough because the challenge is immense and will remain so for some years. Efforts to conquer HIV/AIDS should therefore be scaled up, as complacency can reverse all that has been achieved thus far.

HIV/AIDS is without doubt a major obstacle to development that threatens the social and economic fabric of our nations. It cuts across all sectors and warrants a comprehensive, coordinated, integrated and sustained response. Continued progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS is essential to achieving a number of intertwined Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those of eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, reducing child mortality and developing global partnerships for development.

According to UNAIDS statistics, an estimated 33 million people, half of whom are women, are living with HIV. Two out of three of those people are in Africa. There are about five new infections every minute, of which three are among children and young people. Each day, 5,500 people die from AIDS-related illnesses. As a result, the number of orphans is growing. More than 12 million AIDS orphans are in Africa. Those sobering figures continue to identify Africa as the global epicentre of the AIDS pandemic.

For those reasons, we in Africa support the Secretary-General's recommendation that all stakeholders must reaffirm their commitment to moving towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. Our solid determination in that regard is a must in order to realize the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 6, namely, halting and reversing the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic by 2015.

In order to achieve that, a sustained response is needed. Africa has attempted, with its limited resources, to organize itself to tackle the scourge through prevention and universal treatment. As we may all recall, the African Union decided in Sirte, Libya, in 2005, to establish an African centre that aims primarily at promoting cooperation in the fight against HIV/AIDS and coordinating between specialized centres in that field all over the continent.

It was a united Africa that met in Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2006 to take stock of the HIV/AIDS situation on the continent and to make use of best practices. Following that special summit, the African Union kept its rendezvous with history by reaffirming its commitment to combating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in the Abuja Declaration and the African Common Position. The African Common Position was a continent-wide approach to meeting the challenge of the HIV pandemic. The Abuja Declaration contains several priorities for implementation at the national level, including strengthening health systems; improving information, education and communication; access to treatment, care and support; access to affordable drugs and technologies; research and development on HIV/AIDS, including vaccines, traditional medicine and indigenous knowledge; partnerships; and monitoring and evaluation.

Since then a lot has been done to promote access to comprehensive services, address stigmatization and discrimination and provide support for those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. More and more resources have been mobilized. Numerous actors, including national Governments, civil society and people living with HIV/AIDS, have played a major part in that endeavour.

Despite the progress that has already been made, many challenges remain. Obstacles to universal access to prevention, treatment and medical care include poverty, food insecurity, economic constraints, recurrent armed conflict, natural disasters, fear, ignorance, stigmatization and discrimination. The best way forward is to more effectively implement various global, continental, regional and national commitments that have been adopted by our leaders. That requires well-coordinated partnerships and harmonized strategies. There is also a need to sustain advocacy to

prevent further infection and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on those infected and affected by the disease.

In that regard, we welcome international initiatives to provide financing for Africa in its struggle against HIV and other infectious diseases. We are grateful to development partners who have undertaken to mobilize resources to accelerate universal access to prevention, treatment and medical care. In doing so, we further call for increased and predictable resources within a comprehensive framework of cooperation, without politicization or the imposition of certain social or cultural concepts that do not take into consideration the particularities of each society.

While we have made progress following the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, we are still far from achieving our goals. We need to add fuel to our efforts and sustain our gains.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Mexico, who will speak on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the 23 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that make up the Rio Group: namely, Argentina, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica — representing the Caribbean Community — Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, Mexico.

This meeting is being held against the backdrop of the worst economic and financial crisis of the past 70 years, as well as at a crucial stage in efforts to achieve the goal of universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. As noted in the report (A/63/812) of the Secretary-General, annual funding available for HIV/AIDS programmes in our region rose between 2007 and 2008.

However, that growing trend is now threatened by the current economic crisis. It is therefore crucial that we maintain and increase investments in response to the epidemic. In our countries a significant part of that comes from international cooperation.

Not making the necessary investments against HIV/AIDS will have grave and costly effects in the future, as the linkage between development and HIV/AIDS is clear. While combating HIV/AIDS is itself one of the Millennium Development Goals, it also contributes to the achievement of other development goals, such as gender equality and the empowerment of women, reduced infant mortality and improved maternal health. We also need to ensure sustainability in the response to HIV/AIDS through plans aimed not only at the short term but also at the medium and long terms, including adequate financing schemes and the necessary strengthening of public health systems.

Some 2 million people in our countries are living with HIV/AIDS. The rate of prevalence remains relatively stable in Latin America, but it continues to grow in the Caribbean. Although our region of the developing world has achieved the highest rates of access to antiretroviral medicines, we still face several challenges, namely, preventing new infections, providing the necessary treatment, care and support, and reintegrating HIV-positive people into economic and social activities.

Since the General Assembly addressed the issue of HIV/AIDS in 2001, the Rio Group has stressed the need to achieve universal access to treatment, a goal that seemed impossible at that time. We have seen great progress since then. Although we continue to believe that it is achievable, we should not let down our guard, in particular with regard to the issues of adequate financing to combat HIV/AIDS and generating political leadership. We view universal access as an integral part of guaranteeing and effectively achieving human rights, especially the human right to the highest standard of physical and mental health for all.

In order to achieve universal access to treatment at this crucial stage, we need to make use of cooperation mechanisms, including South-South cooperation, as well as innovative instruments to reduce the cost of antiretroviral drugs, given that a majority of the resources that our countries devote to the epidemic are being used to purchase medicines.

Moreover, in our region we need to increase access to second- and third-line antiretroviral medicines, as well as to reduce their cost. Over the past

few years, we have seen that those prices are not fixed and that it is possible to reduce them.

Likewise, we underscore the importance of defining specific solutions for middle-income countries in order to ensure that initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS respond to the challenges facing our countries, where we experience serious problems of inequality and poverty. It is in those countries that more than 40 per cent of the world's population lives on less than $2 per day.

The Rio Group acknowledges the significant progress reflected in the 2006 Political Declaration, especially with regard to World Trade Organization (WTO) trade-related intellectual property rights not being an obstacle to countries' taking measures, now and in the future, to protect public health, as well as with regard to the resolve to assist developing countries to take advantage of the flexibility provided by WTO.

Moreover, HIV/AIDS and prevention education continue to be the best strategies for reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Such strategies should be comprehensive, evidence-based and aimed at vulnerable groups. They should also include psychological aspects and the building of self-esteem.

The needs of young people should also be taken into account in designing and implementing policies and strategies at the national level, with regard not only to the health sector but also to the education sector as it pertains to education about the epidemic. The aim should be to ensure that, by 2010, at least 95 per cent of young people will have accurate and comprehensive knowledge about HIV and its prevention.

In that context, we would like to recall the contribution of our countries to strengthening efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS, as set out in the ministerial declaration entitled "Preventing with education", which was adopted during the first meeting of ministers of health and education on halting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases in Latin America and the Caribbean, held on 1 August 2008 in Mexico.

It is a fact that factors contributing to the growth of the epidemic can vary from country to country, and even within each country. We should therefore increase resources to ensure greater access to testing and identifying risk and vulnerability factors, while at the same time developing studies to ascertain and meas the impact of the epidemic among various populat groups, with a view to gaining knowledge about epidemic in our countries and to be in a better posit to target and implement appropriate responses to needs of each of our countries.

In preventing and combating HIV/AIDS, strategies must always strictly respect the human rig of people living with HIV. At the same time, we m fight stigma and discrimination, which aff vulnerable groups in our region in particular. Their access to health services, including sexual reproductive health, must be ensured. In that rega we are promoting effective measures of preventi care and support that combat stigma discrimination, in particular against the groups m affected by the pandemic in our countries. T includes clear, transparent and unbiased pub information educational programmes that prom universal access to health services, as well as natio legislation that promotes equality.

The countries of the Rio Group are aware t there are pending issues, such as finding a solution mother-to-child transmission, for which we need redouble our efforts, reduce the feminization of t pandemic and continue to strengthen initiatives research and develop drugs, vaccines and microbicid That requires political will on the part of all, as well compliance by developed countries with th commitments with regard to official developm assistance.

We also firmly believe in the importa contribution that can be made by civil society combating HIV/AIDS. To that end, we are worki closely with all organizations doing invaluable work the area of implementation at the community level. doing so, they are acting as legitimate participants defining strategies and policies. An effective respon requires Governments, international organizations a civil society to work together.

The Rio Group welcomes the initiatives th several of our member States have undertaken with variety of stakeholders at the local, national, region and global levels aimed at addressing the multifacet factors contributing to HIV/AIDS, as well as t commitments recently made to speed up progress health-related Millennium Development Goals.

The Rio Group reaffirms its role as a responsible actor in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We also reiterate our call for not letting down our guard in achieving our goals in the fight against the epidemic.

Lastly, allow me to add a few words in my national capacity.

For Mexico, a starting point for combating the pandemic is to hold open discussions on the topic, working without prejudice with vulnerable groups, such as women; girls and boys living with HIV; young people; men who have sex with men; injecting drug users; sex workers, migrants and prisoners, among others. Moreover, only with comprehensive educational sexuality programmes based on scientific evidence can we provide information and knowledge, and thus empower our society to protect itself against this disease.

Controlling this epidemic requires a direct and head-on fight against stigma, discrimination and homophobia. Silence in the face of those problems is one of the biggest barriers that we face. It is time to eliminate the prejudice and exclusion surrounding HIV.

Ms. Asgeirsdottir (Iceland): At the outset, I would like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812) on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. It provides a valuable update on developments in responding to AIDS. During the General Assembly High-level Meeting on AIDS in June 2008, a large number of countries reported that considerable progress had been made in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, including in the areas of access to antiretroviral therapy and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Unfortunately, those positive trends are not uniform and serious challenges still remain. Regrettably, the rate of new HIV infections continues to outstrip the expansion of treatment programmes and commitment to HIV prevention remains inadequate. Without a doubt, the global financial and economic crisis has made things worse. Active promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as protection of the girl child, are critical to our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Women and adolescent girls are the most exposed to the pandemic and often go without access to preventive care and health services.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the overall expansion of the epidemic among women, children and vulnerable groups. Ensuring the protection of those groups must be key in all actions undertaken to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Iceland firmly believes that an effective response to HIV is one of the soundest forms of global investment in health care and development. It is critical that the commitment to fight HIV/AIDS is maintained and strengthened in the midst of the ongoing economic challenges.

Iceland will continue to do its utmost to support international efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Respect for human rights is at the core of our work towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It is of concern that some countries have laws and regulations that hinder effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for vulnerable subpopulations. Several countries also have laws that restrict the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV, based only on HIV-positive status. Any measures that are likely to make people less inclined to undergo HIV testing undermines efforts to achieve universal access to health care.

Less than two years remain before the agreed deadline for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Only with the concerted effort of all nations can we reach the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Molina (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my Government, I commend the effort of the Member States of this Organization once again for placing a topic of the importance of HIV/AIDS as a commitment to mankind at the centre of the global debate.

Ever since the Secretary-General of the United Nations appealed for Member States to assume the commitments made in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, my country has been involved in them, welcoming the appeal and working to meet those challenges.

We have major progress to report, highlights of which are coverage of antiretroviral treatment for 100 per cent of those who need it. That is guaranteed by law and has made possible a decrease in mortality from HIV and an increase in the survival of affected persons; guaranteed access for all pregnant women to HIV testing and to a protocol for the prevention of

vertical transmission, resulting in a decrease in the HIV vertical transmission rate to 1 per cent from 30 per cent; and increased condom use, especially among adolescents and young people, from 18 per cent to 46 per cent.

We also have a legal framework prohibiting discrimination that prohibits hiring and retention in employment and in the education system conditional on people's serological status and provides for voluntary and confidential HIV testing with pre- and post-test counselling.

Eight years have elapsed since that first appeal and, certainly, we note that there have been very important advances in the world, particularly in the area of care and access to antiretroviral treatment, but also that major challenges and gaps still exist, mainly in access to preventive services. Thus, the epidemic continues to spread, showing that the efforts made have not been sufficient to contain it.

The issue of public health, where most of today's inequities and inequalities exist, determines people's vulnerabilities, significantly affecting the poorest, young people, women, men who have sex with men, refugees, migrants and persons deprived of liberty, among other groups; hence, the need to continue to focus more closely on social factors in dealing with HIV/AIDS prevention, tackling the socio-structural causes and the inequities in order to find more lasting solutions.

Individual, social, cultural and regional realities must be taken into account in order to provide a more effective response to the epidemic, and diversity must be recognized as a cultural asset. This approach involves a demand for information reflecting the various realities and a need for ongoing evaluation of actions.

We need strategic alliances in order to move towards the solution of the problems affecting our societies and, consequently, towards health policies adapted to the epidemiological, social and cultural realities of the various countries.

Much more decisive involvement of relevant actors is required in order to achieve these goals. We need to address this issue in a more cross-cutting fashion in society, with greater shared responsibility involving more social actors, different government sectors, the private sector and grass-roots organizations, among others.

For our Government, unconditional respect for the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and for the most vulnerable sectors of the population is not only a duty of the State but a requirement if we are to make progress in controlling the epidemic and fulfilling the ethical responsibility of an increasingly democratic society.

Chile welcomes the creation of collective and supportive forums and initiatives with the aim of pooling efforts and resources as a substantive step forward in the struggle to close the immense economic gap in responses to HIV between the industrialized world and the countries with fewer resources. My country is participating in a series of collaborative initiatives to make prevention strategies, drugs and programmes to combat stigma and discrimination more accessible, thus benefiting the least protected populations.

Mention should also be made of the initiative concerning universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care proposed by the lead agencies for the issue, the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which stresses the importance and urgency of more decisive interventions and actions to deal with this problem.

Lastly, I should like to state that Chile reaffirms its commitment to continue working to stem the AIDS epidemic in our country, to cooperate at the international and regional levels and thus to contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and of the targets set in this important Assembly.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): It is indeed with heightened interest that I am taking part in this debate of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment of 2001 on HIV/AIDS. In addition to the importance that this issue has for my country, which in 2008 devoted some 13 per cent of its budget for multilateral cooperation to projects and programmes aimed at combating HIV/AIDS, the results of international action in the area of HIV/AIDS and the strengthening of efforts made in this area are at the core of the work of the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations, the Council which it is my honour to preside this year.

Every year the Economic and Social Council considers the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), a programme that, it should be recalled, the Council established in 1994, in accordance with its mandate for coordinating the United Nations system in the development area. This year, the Council is, we could say, doubly interested in this issue, given the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review in which it will be engaging next month, namely, the implementation of objectives and commitments adopted on the international level with regard to public health.

Millennium Development Goal 6 — combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other illnesses — is certainly a part of this theme. The issue of HIV/AIDS is also part of a broader framework of strengthening health structures and of universal mobilization to speed up progress in an area where our peoples are awaiting solidarity and effectiveness from the international community, and from the United Nations in particular.

I can therefore assure the Assembly that the problem of HIV/AIDS will receive all the attention due it within the framework of the Ministerial Review from 6 to 9 July. I cite as a demonstration of the interest in the regional ministerial meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place last 5 and 6 June in Montego Bay, Jamaica, as part of the preparation for our July session, devoted specifically to the problem of HIV/AIDS and to its impact on development in that region of the world. I thus now have the opportunity, once again, to thank most sincerely the authorities of Jamaica for their welcome, and also all of the participants, who made the conference such a genuine success.

While the progress made in preventing and combating HIV/AIDS, as shown in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812), are encouraging in several ways, it also brings to mind the magnitude of the disease and assists us in highlighting the major axes for action in an area where the worst possible thing would be to reduce vigilance. The debates held in preparation for the Annual Ministerial Review, and in particular, during the recent meeting in Montego Bay, reveal a number of guidelines on the subject of HIV/AIDS within the context of development which I would like to share with the Assembly.

First of all, Governments must act on the inter-ministerial level to draw up horizontal and integrated policies capable of having an impact on the spread of the disease. Thus, in addition to the ministers for health, those for education, labour, finance and foreign affairs also have an important role to play. Education and communication are decisive in providing information on HIV/AIDS, combating the stigmatization of individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS, and preventing their marginalization.

Secondly, public policy in all sectors must be drawn up so as to contribute to the objectives of health. Food, access to drinking water, hygiene, urbanization in a sustainable fashion must go hand-in-hand and form the basic elements for public action in the health field and therefore also in combating HIV/AIDS. Hunger and malnutrition have particularly serious repercussions for those people who are already vulnerable, as well as for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Thirdly, there is an imperative need to adapt and change perception and behaviour towards persons who are infected or ill in order to respect their dignity and their fundamental rights. Specialists worldwide today are in agreement in attaching as much importance to the human and social aspects as to a purely medical approach in efforts at prevention and in access to care.

Fourthly, the results obtained remain inequitable and often leave disadvantaged communities marginalized. Access to care must be democratized through mechanisms for social security adapted to the needs of the poorest and to risk sharing. Let us recall today that the vast majority of individuals who live with the virus are in sub-Saharan Africa, where the proportion of women in the population affected amounts to 60 per cent. The improvement of maternal and infant health, an area in which tragically little progress has been made, will greatly contribute to the objectives of combating HIV/AIDS.

Finally, in the context of an economic and financial crisis, the international community must see to the maintenance of the financing of health systems by ensuring that the macroeconomic context does not imperil the progress made to achieve the international development goals in this area. We are aware today that official development assistance has made a considerable contribution to progress in the areas of

HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Those flows must not under any circumstances be allowed to run dry.

These preliminary conclusions will be further developed and refined during the ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council from 6 to 9 July in Geneva. I count on the mobilization of all actors in the health field, including those from civil society and the private sector, to maintain the international momentum for health throughout the world, which represents both the expression of and the prerequisite for our development. I also hope to make use of the considerable international expertise in the prevention of and fight against HIV to motivate international action in other health fields, where the results are less significant.

The participation of all in the purest traditions of the Economic and Social Council will be most welcome at the July meeting.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to convey my gratitude and appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting, to the Secretary-General and to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for their great efforts in carrying out their work.

I wish to emphasize the great importance that the State of Qatar attaches to the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. This meeting comes at a time when we are approaching the year 2010. We look forward to achieving the objective of providing access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support programmes throughout the world at a time when there is growing evidence that the efforts and investments aimed at addressing the widespread transmission of HIV/AIDS are not adequate. The Assembly must therefore renew its commitment and step up its collective and individual efforts to implement the necessary measures to face the disease by strengthening and promoting established funding mechanisms and guaranteeing continuous support to low- and middle-income countries during the current global economic and financial crisis.

The people of Qatar believe that the spread of HIV/AIDS is not just a health problem, but that it affects all society and is a challenge to development because of its economic and social great impact. The problem is not the number of those who have been infected or affected by the disease; it is the concealment and denial of infection out of fear of discrimination and stigma, which contribute to the accelerated spread of the disease.

Despite its low rate of infection, the State of Qatar has committed to implementing the Declaration and has taken several measures, including the establishment of the National Committee for the Prevention of AIDS in June 2006, and attaches particular importance to promoting cooperative relations with relevant international organizations. Thus, a cooperation agreement has been signed between the National Committee for the Prevention of AIDS and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to draft the enlarged and comprehensive national strategy to combat the spread of the virus in the State of Qatar that has helped to maintain the continued low rate of infection. Programmes and policies have also been adopted that are compatible with the religious principles and values of the community and are based on Islamic sharia law. Comprehensive support is also being provided to those infected with the virus and their families and to providing extensive health care and antiretroviral drugs for all, without discrimination and free of charge.

The National Committee is at work on legislation to help the State support the rights of those infected with the virus and to make those rights part of State law. This legislation will be the first of its kind in the Arab world, and we will work towards making it a regional document that supports those affected by HIV/AIDS in the Arab region.

My delegation has noted the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812) and wishes to commend the efforts that went into preparing it. In this context, Qatar wishes to work with all States and to point out the importance of recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, as no one programme can be followed by all States in the framework of implementing the Declaration of Commitment and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Cultural and religious differences make it necessary to identify different plans and strategies to combat the disease.

In the State of Qatar, the National Committee has prepared many programmes and projects aimed at building national capacities. We have recommended several preventive activities in cooperation with the World Health Organization and UNDP, including the

establishment of a training course for those, including religious leaders, who work with young people. The efficacy of religious and cultural training has proved its worth in many States, and we urge UNAIDS to continue cooperating with States in the development of quality programmes in a manner consistent with the needs of local communities and relevant religious and cultural values.

The huge challenges we face require us to redouble our efforts at the level of Government, the United Nations system, civil society organizations, mass media, religious leadership, donors and pharmaceutical companies to bridge the huge gap between what has been achieved and the objectives we are working to attain by 2010.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to say that France subscribes to the statement made this morning by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I also wish to convey France's gratitude to the Secretary-General for the very high quality of his report on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812).

We believe that this annual meeting is essential in taking stock of the efforts made in combating HIV/AIDS and in keeping the attention of the international community focused on the question. Monitoring the epidemic and following its development is essential. The report of the Secretary-General shows the extent to which that varies depending on countries and regions. Knowledge of national epidemiological profiles is indispensable for the implementation of proper national strategies to combat HIV/AIDS.

Last year, we assessed the considerable progress that had been made since 2001, with approximately 3 million patients having access to antiretroviral treatments. This year, we can once again welcome the additional progress made in access to antiretroviral therapies and the access of women to services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, inter alia. This progress is encouraging and shows the effectiveness of the action undertaken by the various partners involved in the fight against this pandemic. In this context, I would like to emphasize the vital role being played by the Global Fund and the International Drug Purchase Facility in terms of access to treatment.

Despite all of this progress, we must recognize that there is still a long way to go towards achieving the objective of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support services by the year 2010. France here reaffirms its commitment to that objective, one that we have raised within the context of the G8 meetings.

Beyond that specific objective, the fight against AIDS contributes to the implementation of the other Millennium Development Goals. This pandemic is indeed one of the greatest impediments to economic and human development in Africa. There are still too many who are ill and do not have access to treatment, and only 33 per cent of HIV-positive pregnant women benefit from services aimed at preventing mother-to-child transmission. This is unacceptable. As we know today, scientific advances have made it possible to prevent this kind of transmission. France welcomes the initiative undertaken by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to eliminate transmission by 2015.

The international community must not relent in its efforts. Despite the economic and financial crisis, France will ensure that it fulfils its international financial commitments in combating HIV/AIDS and that it remains in the vanguard of that struggle. Access to treatment must not overshadow the importance of prevention for all groups. Each group has its own specific features, whether young women, women, migrants, intravenous drug users or sexual minorities, to mention only the major groups.

The struggle against HIV/AIDS, however, is not solely a question of financing but also a matter of approach. Until now, we have limited ourselves to a crisis response. Today, we need to add a more long-term policy to that response. In this context, my delegation would like to emphasize two points in particular.

First, such a policy will depend on the strengthening of health systems. France therefore supported including the issue of strengthening health systems in the programmes financed by the Global Fund, thus complementing the efforts of the World Health Organization in this field. Staff training and retention, along with efforts to strengthen the capacity of States in the health sphere, are essential in order to take advantage of international efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and for health in general. In addition,

activities undertaken to combat HIV/AIDS and associated infections must not be conducted in isolation, as such efforts can also help in the fight against other diseases. This is a question of equal access to care for all.

Secondly, this policy hinges on action aimed at changing mindsets by fighting discrimination, devoting greater attention to vulnerable or marginalized groups, including women, migrants, sexual minorities and intravenous drug users, and implementing prevention policies to avoid risky practices. We welcome the work conducted by UNAIDS in this context.

We also welcome the work of the International Task Team on HIV-related Travel Restrictions, and we reaffirm the need to combat all forms of discrimination against, stigmatization of and limitation of freedom of movement or residence for individuals living with HIV.

We also welcome the fact that the subject of prevention for intravenous drug users is on the agenda for the next meeting of the Executive Board of UNAIDS. It is now up to UNAIDS to take initiatives and provide guidelines in these various areas. But it is the responsibility of the States themselves to take all useful measures to avoid the spread of the pandemic. The establishment of specific programmes aimed at vulnerable groups and at combating any stigmatization of individuals living with HIV/AIDS is an integral part of this.

In December 2008, France launched an appeal, at the United Nations, for the universal decriminalization of homosexuality. This declaration was backed by 67 countries, and we welcome the fact that the United States has also recently given it its support. Today, we reiterate that appeal to all countries that have not yet signed the declaration.

I would like to conclude by adding that the fight against HIV/AIDS concerns all of us, including in particular those who are ill. France would therefore like to welcome once again the central role played by civil society and other organizations in this sphere. Without them, the mobilization of the international community on this issue would never have been as strong as it is.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/812), which provides a useful update on developments in the global response to HIV/AIDS. One year after the General Assembly's high-level meeting on progress achieved in realizing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the fight against the HIV epidemic remains one of the highest priorities of the international community. For more than 25 years, HIV/AIDS has caused immense suffering throughout the world and has had devastating consequences on development and human rights. The Declaration of Commitment is our foremost tool to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS, both nationally and in our multilateral efforts. Indeed, the fight against HIV/AIDS is one of the areas where the United Nations has proven most effective and indispensable. Our success will have a strong impact on our progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Nine years after the adoption of the Declaration, its comprehensive approach is more relevant than ever. We recognized at the time that HIV/AIDS is a complex phenomenon and that we need to address it in all its aspects in order to be successful. Much of the progress that has been made in recent years has come about through relevant health and development policies and improved funding.

That progress, however, and the lack thereof in specific areas, has led us to realize even more clearly that the fight against HIV/AIDS is as much a human rights imperative as it is a health and development issue. Direct and indirect discrimination against people living with HIV and the populations most vulnerable to infection pose serious challenges to the implementation of the Declaration and the achievement of MDG 6. We share the Secretary-General's concern with regard to HIV-related travel restrictions, overly broad criminalization of HIV transmission and discriminatory laws impeding access to health services by high-risk groups. The response to HIV/AIDS will not be effective without a full understanding of the social and structural determinants of HIV risk and vulnerability. As a consequence, we must fully address the human rights dimension of the epidemic, including gender inequalities, social marginalization, stigma and discrimination.

While the international community has devoted almost unprecedented financial means to the fight against HIV/AIDS, the goal of halting and reversing its spread by 2015 remains an enormous challenge. The rate of progress in expanding access to essential

services still does not keep pace with the expansion of HIV itself.

We must therefore not relent in our efforts and place even stronger emphasis on the area of prevention. In order to successfully ensure prevention in both low-income and high-income countries, we need to improve knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the risk of infection. HIV prevention is the cornerstone of our long-term success. Its effectiveness could greatly improve through an integrated approach with existing programmes regarding tuberculosis, maternal and child health, and sexual and reproductive health.

The financial and economic crisis poses an additional threat to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment and to the goal of achieving, by 2010, universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment for all those who need it. Liechtenstein remains committed to that goal. We concur with the Secretary-General's statement that the HIV response represents a sound global investment. Liechtenstein has therefore continued to increase the resources invested for that purpose, both domestically and at the international level.

Our contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS at the global level even surpasses our contribution to the regular United Nations budget. Within the United Nations family, we are currently contributing to programmes run by UNICEF and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. That is in addition to our participation in financing the Global Fund. We are committed to continuing our financial contribution in the future, and hope that other States will uphold and further expand their commitments as well.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (spoke in Chinese): The Chinese delegation has carefully read the report (A/63/812) submitted by the Secretary-General under this item. We very much appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations in promoting global common action to combat HIV/AIDS.

Having made the fight against HIV/AIDS a high priority, the Chinese Government has placed that issue on its agenda of work as a strategic matter bearing on economic development, social stability, State security and the fate of our nation. We have set up the initial form of a mechanism for combating HIV/AIDS that addresses the specific situation of China, and have achieved remarkable progress in combating HIV/AIDS. The Government has formulated and implemented a policy of "four frees and one care", namely, free voluntary blood tests, free antiretroviral treatment for needy urban and rural AIDS patients, free medical advice and treatment for pregnant women with HIV and their babies, free education for AIDS orphans, and Government-provided care for AIDS patients who live in poverty. All of that is with a view to achieving universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support.

We have intensified and expanded our comprehensive and integrated fight against HIV/AIDS in order to reduce new infections. We have further strengthened international exchanges and cooperation in that regard and have worked to ensure that efforts to combat HIV/AIDS follow the law and scientific methods. China will continue to actively fulfil its international obligations, help other developing countries combat HIV/AIDS by providing assistance and technological support and continue to take an active part in transnational and transregional cooperation to combat HIV/AIDS.

Like many other developing countries, China faces the problems of uneven economic, social and cultural development among different regions and extremely limited per capita resources for the purpose of combating HIV/AIDS. Inputs in that respect fall far short of meeting the actual need. We therefore hope that United Nations institutions will take further action to support developing countries in their efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. I would like to stress the following two points with regard to the future work of the relevant United Nations bodies.

First, they must continue to increase financial and technical support. In their endeavours to implement the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, China's health infrastructure and service capacity have come up against formidable challenges. We hope that United Nations bodies will provide more financial and technical support to help China address practical difficulties in combating HIV/AIDS, such as the high cost of antiretroviral treatment and the shortage of medicines.

Secondly, coordination among international organizations must be strengthened. In order to guarantee the effective allocation of resources and the orderly implementation of projects, we hope that United Nations institutions will utilize their respective advantages and influence to play a better coordinating

role among various international organizations and facilitate the integration of projects of different international organizations within a given recipient country. In combating HIV/AIDS, we also hope that the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS will reinforce coordination and cooperation with international organizations working to combat drugs and eradicate poverty. We also hope that it will focus its input on priority areas.

HIV/AIDS is the common enemy of humankind. Defeating it is our shared goal. We are willing to work with the international community to explore and study strategies and measures to combat HIV/AIDS and to effectively implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS so as to contribute to the global endeavour to effectively curb the disease.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore be brief, touching on a few additional points from my national perspective.

The High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General on 15 June 2008 was a landmark event in terms of global efforts against HIV/AIDS. The meeting gave us an opportunity to assess the progress in responding to this unprecedented epidemic. Today, we have yet another opportunity to evaluate the progress as well as the remaining challenges in meeting the targets set in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the commitments reaffirmed in the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

In that context, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/812), which provides a concise update of progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS and puts forth recommendations for reaching the 2010 target pledged by the Member States.

HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue, but a matter of human security. As such, the fight against the pandemic is very much part of the global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and thus to defeat poverty, to ensure gender equality, to prevent discrimination and to secure the universal enjoyment of human rights.

According to figures provided by the Turkish Ministry of Health, the number of HIV-positive cases in my country had reached 3,370 as of December 2008. Although the number of HIV cases is relatively small, it is on the increase. We are concerned that the following factors could have the potential to further contribute to that increase: the young population of Turkey, the general lack of awareness about sexually transmitted diseases, the increase in intravenous drug use, the influx of commercial sex workers and the high number of Turkish men working abroad. We therefore have to be vigilant.

There is no major problem in Turkey with respect to the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients. A comprehensive reporting system, including a coding system for HIV/AIDS, was established in 1985. We have put in place an important range of preventive measures. HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment are free of charge. Serological testing is mandatory for blood, tissue and organ donors and for registered sex workers and patients who undergo major surgical operations.

In 1996, the National AIDS Commission was established in order to carry out countrywide activities. The Commission continues to review progress in the field, with the participation of 35 representatives from State institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system.

Despite progress, there are also challenges, such as insufficient preventive services for vulnerable groups, an increasing number of unregistered sex workers, intravenous drug users, and high treatment costs.

However, universal access to prevention and treatment-specific services is an attainable goal. In fact, the current National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS lays out our national strategies from 2007 to 2011 to enhance our activities in the fields of prevention and support, voluntary counselling and testing, diagnosis and treatment, the creation of a supportive environment, monitoring and evaluation, social support and intersectoral collaboration.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic requires a sustained global response. The international community must stand by its commitments to combat HIV/AIDS and meet Millennium Development Goal 6 targets. In addition to its national efforts to meet this global challenge, Turkey remains committed to contributing to international efforts to assist vulnerable groups. With that understanding and as an emerging donor in

international development efforts, Turkey has allocated a contribution of $3 million for the period 2008-2010 to the United Nations system for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

We will continue to work in collaboration with the relevant bodies of the United Nations in order to assist those countries that are less fortunate than ourselves, in terms of both economic capability and the burden of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): Since this is the first occasion on which I have had the opportunity as Australia's new Permanent Representative to address the General Assembly, I would like to say how much I am looking forward to working with the President of the Assembly and all of our colleagues in the years ahead. I was a junior diplomat in the Australian Mission here in New York in the early 1980s when HIV/AIDS first was recognized by all of us as a lethal threat. It left a lethal imprint on this city, New York, as it has everywhere else. We must never let the war against it abate.

We are here to track our progress in meeting our shared commitment to universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. That commitment is, as the Secretary-General has said, based on the fundamental right of all people to the support, services and commodities that will protect them in health and provide them with care and treatment when they are ill. That is a very simple, linear proposition for all of us.

In Australia's region, the Asia-Pacific, we know that most countries are well behind schedule to achieve universal access by 2010, and that many more countries are unlikely to achieve Millennium Development Goal 6 to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Our region suffers around 1,300 new infections every day. As 2010 fast approaches, we are increasingly aware of the need we have to accelerate progress if we are to make anywhere near good on our pledges.

In the time of global recession that we face now, many Governments are, of course, under pressure to cut services, and reduced family incomes may force people to take more risks. Therefore, we need to be smart right now about identifying the key actions that will maximize the resources we have and ensure that what efforts we make and must continue to make are effective.

This year, Australia launched a new strategy for development assistance for HIV/AIDS, which we call "Intensifying the response: Halting the spread of HIV". Its goal is to make a significant and sustained effort to help our partner countries to achieve the goal of universal access, the target of the sixth Millennium Development Goal.

The key question for Australia is a very simple one. Again, it is very linear: how can we actually help our partners to do better? Drawing on our international experience and information provided by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), as well as the report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia, we have concluded that one of the key actions we could support to accelerate the response was to intensify HIV prevention, especially among those vulnerable populations at greater risk. Comprehensive services are vitally important, but as the Secretary-General has made clear, we need also to remove impediments to universal access, those intangible obstacles to prevention, care and treatment that have been created through stigmatizing laws and policies.

Our new HIV/AIDS strategy prioritizes the review and improvement of legal and policy frameworks. This strategy includes support given to the implementation of policies and laws through education and training of law enforcement personnel and service providers. The removal of discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and against people at higher risk of infection is absolutely vital, as we know, to effective HIV/AIDS treatment and care.

The Commission on AIDS in Asia has estimated that by 2020, male-to-male sex will become one of the main sources of new HIV/AIDS infections in Asia. Protecting people from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation removes their fear of reprisal and the perception they have of a need for secrecy and increases the likelihood of their accessing health services.

Sex work, too, is often criminalized and highly stigmatized in too many societies. That makes sex workers reluctant to access health-care services or to report violence or abuse, which makes it hard, of course, to negotiate safe sex.

Australia is already helping our partner countries to revise policy and legal frameworks through what we call our HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Programme. The programme aims to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS

associated with drug use and promotes policies, laws and services that enable drug users to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS, as well as to seek treatment and rehabilitation for their drug use. The programme advocates for policies that bring together public security, public health and civil society to reduce the harm related to drug use as well as harassment and discrimination against those who use drugs.

Research in Australia's neighbour, Papua New Guinea, and elsewhere has established that women who have experienced physical and sexual violence have higher rates of HIV infection. And women with HIV/AIDS, of course, often suffer violent reprisals when they tell their partners of their HIV status. Australia is working with Papua New Guinea to roll out what we characterize as a national gender policy on HIV. This policy addresses the gender inequality and violence that renders women and girls, who are much less able to protect themselves than men, more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection.

Australia knows from our own domestic experience with HIV/AIDS how critical policies and laws are. The policy of partnership with those communities most affected by HIV/AIDS was absolutely essential to our success in Australia in reversing the epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s. These communities included people with HIV, people who use drugs, men who have sex with men, and sex workers. The key was partnership, working with the Government, health sector personnel and researchers, and that ensured the success of our public health efforts.

Finally, I am pleased to say that Australia will not falter in its contribution to the global HIV/AIDS response. By the time the Millennium Development Goals target comes around in 2015, we will have increased our total development aid to 0.5 per cent of gross national income. This year, we will contribute $A160 million to the international HIV/AIDS response, including core funding for United Nations agencies working on HIV/AIDS and the doubling of our funding to UNAIDS. This contribution is part of a much larger multi-year programme of assistance.

Our aim is obvious. It is to assist countries to meet our common goal of health and development for all, including, especially, the most marginalized and vulnerable members of our societies, those who are pushed into taking unnecessary risks with their health, and often, their lives. This is a commitment Australia will continue to take very seriously. Indeed, we must all continue to do so.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): On behalf of the Government of the Bahamas, I have the honour to present this statement on agenda item 41. I reaffirm the steadfast commitment of my Government to the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/812), which outlines developments in the AIDS response and a series of recommendations on key actions necessary to accelerate progress and to renew our commitment to the goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

On behalf of my Government, I also extend greetings and best wishes to Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and assure him of the support and cooperation of the Bahamas.

One year ago, we assembled here in a High-level Meeting to assess progress in response to the global HIV epidemic. We took note of some key achievements, such as a 47-per cent increase in 2007 in access to antiretroviral therapy and treatment, as well as an 18-per cent increase in access to services for HIV-infected pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission. We have also seen a decline in HIV prevalence among young pregnant women in several countries in high-prevalence regions. Indeed, the global AIDS response has produced some positive results and has played a major role in ensuring better health care and services for millions of people, particularly in low- to middle-income countries. However, the status of the epidemic remains daunting, with an estimated 33 million people presently living with HIV, half of whom are women, and an estimated five new infections every minute, of which three are among children and young people.

The rate of new infections surpasses the growth of treatment programmes. For the Bahamas, this is profound, as we continue to experience an increase in new infections among young women in the 15-25 age group. The vulnerability of this group is alarming. It tells us that we are falling short of our commitment to HIV prevention, particularly where women and girls are concerned. We must do more to combat gender

inequalities, which increase the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV, and also provide greater access to prevention services. Such efforts are critical to sustaining a long-term response and underscore the need for renewed and sustained financial and political commitment.

It is apparent that efforts to meet our commitments are severely hampered by the current global economic crisis to which many delegations have alluded today. We can all agree that the world's social development agenda is at risk as the current crisis poses a serious challenge to all of us. At this juncture, my delegation applauds the convening yesterday of the Secretary-General's forum on advancing global health in the face of crisis. We commend the efforts of the United Nations to raise awareness of the effects of the current crisis across all spectrums on global health. Too often, we hear of people having to make difficult choices of whether to pay for medication or put food on the table. This is not a choice that one should have to make at the expense of one's health. Meeting global health needs in a coordinated and comprehensive manner is critical to sustainable development.

Small developing countries like the Bahamas are continually faced with challenges posed by the crisis. Recent budget shortfalls and decreased revenues have placed severe constraints on our national development agenda. However, we are making every effort to meet our commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS and continue to see significant progress in our response to the epidemic, particularly in the area of prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Recognizing the need to effectively combat discrimination and to eliminate underreporting by men who have sex with men, we have expanded outreach activities to that community, which, historically, has been difficult to reach. In addition, we have undertaken a revision of our policy and programmatic response to address specific national situations, which has resulted in the decentralization of HIV/AIDS comprehensive care and the implementation of a public-health information system to strengthen overall primary care delivery, to monitor the standard of care and to provide information for planning and decision-making.

The Bahamas response is guided by a national AIDS strategic plan for 2007-2015, which was recently updated and adheres closely to the UNAIDS principle of the "three ones". We have been effective in our planning, programming and use of funds, with the assistance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, including Government agencies, community and faith-based organizations, the private sector and national and international organizations, including non-governmental organizations, UNAIDS, the AIDS Foundation, the PanAmerican Health Organization and the Clinton Foundation. On behalf of my Government, I extend sincere thanks and appreciation for the support and assistance of these organizations.

As a further demonstration of its commitment to HIV/AIDS and as noted in its 2008 national report on progress towards the Declaration of Commitment made at the General Assembly's 2001 special session on HIV/AIDS, the Government of the Bahamas spends approximately $2.5 million annually on provisions for HIV and AIDS care through the National HIV/AIDS Centre budgetary allocations. This does not include funds spent through the Department of Public Health or the Public Hospitals Authority, two key departments of the Ministry of Health for the provision of care for persons with HIV and AIDS.

During the 2009-2010 budget debate, which is currently in session in Parliament in the Bahamas, the Government has increased allocations to the Department of Public Health and the Public Hospital Authority, totalling more than $9 million, to diminish any potential negative effects of the crisis on the health care of citizens of the Bahamas.

The Bahamas is also fully engaged in and committed to the 2008-2012 Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS, which is designed to serve as a guide for the development of individual national strategic plans for HIV/AIDS. The current framework is the second of its kind for the Caribbean region and builds on the first, while addressing the weaknesses identified in the evaluation process.

While we have made significant strides in improving the quality of life for persons living with HIV and AIDS, we recognize that persistent gaps remain in terms of human resources, funding and infrastructure development. Monitoring and evaluation must continue to receive priority attention. I am pleased to report that the development of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework within the National HIV/AIDS Centre is under way. We are actively working to strengthen capacity in this area and

are committed to closing the gaps identified in our 2008 national report. In order to do so, we must find innovative financing mechanisms to sustain the expansion and development of HIV and AIDS programmes and to address other development challenges, such as those associated with poverty, food insecurity and climate change.

For the Bahamas, sustainable funding is a key challenge. The strategy for achieving the goals and objectives of our national HIV/AIDS strategic plan will require additional funds. The calls for a sustained increase in funding commitments cannot go unheeded. As the Secretary-General noted in his report, an estimated annual outlay of $25 billion will be needed to achieve national universal targets by 2010. We cannot afford to miss the target, otherwise millions will suffer.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the statement made by the Minister of Health of the Bahamas last year: "No country can win the fight against HIV and AIDS alone." (*A/62/PV.104, p. 24*) We must continue to forge ahead with the broad and sustained participation and support of all stakeholders, while remaining ever cognizant of the need to protect the human rights of those living with HIV, as well as those at risk.

Ms. Dunlop (Brazil): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

At the outset, I wish to recall the historic decision adopted in 2001 by the General Assembly, a groundbreaking document because it acknowledged that an effective strategy to combat HIV/AIDS had to rely on prevention, care and treatment. What seems obvious and unquestionable now did not seem so then. We have come a long way. Today, I can reaffirm the commitment of my country to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic in different ways, including by ensuring universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for all. That commitment is aimed at responding not only to a public health demand but also to the promotion and protection of the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, including women and girls, young people, migrants and members of vulnerable groups.

The fact that many countries have adopted HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence, as we have been informed by the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/63/812, is of particular concern. Brazil considers that any restriction based solely on HIV status is discriminatory. In particular, the deportation of any person living with HIV based on his or her HIV status should not override humanitarian and human rights considerations.

Also of concern is the persistence of homophobia, gender stereotypes and other forms of discrimination against vulnerable groups. Such discrimination may hinder understanding of the epidemic and undermine risk reduction and accessibility to treatment.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Brazil has been stabilized thanks to an integrated and comprehensive response that includes promoting health, preventing new infections and providing comprehensive universal care for people living with AIDS. That response is a joint effort that involves various sectors of the Government, civil society organizations, universities, the private sector, United Nations agencies and bilateral partners.

We are in the middle of a very serious financial and economic crisis that is threatening the hard-won social gains of the past few years. In order to protect the investment made in the fight against HIV/AIDS, we need increased human, material and financial resources. A substantial part of the money spent on fighting the AIDS epidemic is spent on medicines. Each dollar saved in the purchase of medicines is crucial to saving more lives.

Universal access presupposes access to affordable medicines of good quality. To provide access to those medicines, we must reconcile public health needs with intellectual property rights. Brazil underlines the important role of the Doha Declaration on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement and Public Health. We also reaffirm the right of countries to use to the fullest extent the flexibilities related to that Agreement. Brazil also welcomes the adoption of the complete global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property during the latest World Health Assembly.

Also important for ensuring access to medicines, especially generic medicines, is their unimpeded transit, free of artificial trade-related barriers, on the way to their final destination.

As access to affordable drugs is still a challenge for many developing countries, Brazil recognizes the importance of pursuing new innovative financing mechanisms. We also commend the activities of the International Drug Purchase Facility, which supports countries in purchasing drugs for second-line treatment for HIV infection, tuberculosis and malaria.

Because HIV/AIDS is still the leading infectious disease challenge in public health, it must be addressed in conjunction with efforts to strengthen health systems in the long run. The specific characteristics of the epidemic require that appropriate resources be allocated, as the epidemic's potential to overburden health systems is enormous.

The promotion of condom use, combined with other strategies, is essential in any HIV prevention policy. One of the reasons that Brazil has managed to stabilize the epidemic is the significant increase in the use of male condoms, not only among more vulnerable groups but also among the general population. The increased use of female condoms has added to the safety net and helped women protect themselves from infection. Prevention strategies based on moral values should remain individual choices. Although they are not to be disregarded, they do not by themselves make up a basis for public health policies.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for the work of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and its important role in coordinating United Nations efforts to strengthen national responses to fight the epidemic.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.89

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

89th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 16 June 2009, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 41 ***(continued)***

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/812)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/63/152 and Add.1)

Draft decision (A/63/L.73)

Mr. Muita (Kenya): Let me begin my statement by echoing the many messages of sincere condolences and commiseration to the people and Government of Gabon on the demise of their President, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Vice-Presidents of this session during these high-level meetings on HIV/AIDS for your dedication in facilitating our deliberations. I would likewise like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the constant and focused reports on issues pertinent to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We also wish to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Swaziland on behalf of the African Group.

During the 1990s, the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Kenya was nearly one in five. However, concerted efforts by all stakeholders during the subsequent period, in particular at the highest level of Government, have borne profound results. The HIV infection rate in Kenya began its decline soon thereafter. By 2001, it had dropped to about 14 per cent, further declining to just over 6 per cent by the end of 2006. A more recent household survey — the Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey — was completed last year. The data, which is currently being analysed, will provide more detailed information on HIV/AIDS and other related sexually transmitted infections in the country.

Even with the modest gains, the Government and all other stakeholders are pushing for new initiatives aimed at further ameliorating the situation. Last March, the Government and partners launched the third strategic plan for HIV/AIDS. The plan, which is being promulgated after the completion of a comprehensive review on the current strategy — the Kenya National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan II — is expected to become operational in July 2009. The new plan has set out ambitious strategic goals. It aims to achieve Kenya's universal access targets for high-quality integrated services at all levels to prevent new HIV infections, reduce HIV-related illnesses and deaths and mitigate the effects of the epidemic on households and communities.

The proposed strategic thrusts and approaches of the new plan are as follows: first, the provision of cost-effective services informed by a gender- and rights-based approach for universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support; secondly, targeted, community-based programmes that support universal

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access and social transformation for an AIDS-informed society supported in all communities; thirdly, long-term programmes to address both the root causes and effects of HIV, which should take into account the fact that people with access to education, health services, rights protection and income are less vulnerable to HIV infection in the first place; and fourthly, all stakeholders shall operate within a nationally owned harmonized and aligned framework at all levels supporting mutual monitoring and accountability.

Despite our hard-won successes, HIV/AIDS continues to be a major concern of my Government. Currently, more than 1 million people are living with HIV/AIDS. Today, an additional 250,000 patients need to be given antiretroviral therapy.

I should now like to refer to some of the notable challenges.

With regard to financing for the scaling up of responses to AIDS in the country, overall, during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 fiscal years, the country spent nearly $500 million from combined donor and Government sources on responding to HIV/AIDS. The bulk of HIV/AIDS financing in the country comes from the donor community. Within the country, the budget allocation for HIV/AIDS has to contend with competing diseases of equal importance, such as malaria. We need to explore alternative financing arrangements to complement domestic and donor support.

With regard to human resources in Kenya's health sector, the provision of good health services is labour-intensive, requiring qualified health workers. Unfortunately, many health sector workers have left the country for developed economies, leaving the health sector under-resourced. An investment of $50 million per year for five years is required to put a reasonably sized of health workforce into place.

With regard to affordable commodities and low-cost technologies, drugs, medical supplies and equipment are major factors contributing to the high cost of health care. Legislative reforms to facilitate the use of high-quality generic drugs and standardized medical equipment could reduce health sector costs, as could increased investment in low-cost prevention technologies like microbicides, vaccines, health education and the expansion of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT).

Lastly, with regard to human rights, stigma and discrimination, and gender equity, awareness on the part of health workers and people living with HIV/AIDS of their legal rights to treatment and care needs to be enhanced. Stigma and discrimination contribute to low rates of use of VCT services, especially in rural areas. In Kenya, aggressive campaigns in all forms of media and many workshops at the community level, in schools and other institutions have been carried out by the Government in coordination with civil society, the private sector, employers and others and have helped reduce stigma and combat social exclusion associated with the epidemic.

In conclusion, I wish to state that the provision of universal access to prevention, care, treatment and support services requires more than access to antiretroviral drugs. It requires trained health-care professionals, suitable facilities, current information and increased funding, all integrated into a fully functional health-care system. It is incumbent upon us to act in order to help our people. Our inaction is making this world a more dangerous place to live in. Individual efforts, however feeble, will make a difference. As we work towards preventing infection, we must scale up support and care for the infected and the affected, particularly widows and orphans.

Finally, let me draw attention to some areas that Kenya feels require urgent follow-up. The sustainability of HIV/AIDS funding is critically important, particularly for antiretroviral treatment (ART). Because ART requires a life-long commitment, people using this treatment should have access to drugs in a sustainable way. Funding for prevention programmes has been inadequate and thus should be enhanced, since prevention is the best way to fight HIV/AIDS. Financial support for fighting HIV/AIDS should be provided in the form of grants, not loans. Kenya and other low- and middle-income countries should be considered for debt relief without conditionalities, and funds should be channelled to other priority areas, including the war against HIV/AIDS.

Mrs. Melon (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to align itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Mexico, who spoke on behalf of the Rio Group. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the report presented on the progress and challenges of the implementation

of the commitments agreed upon regarding the HIV/AIDS Declaration of 2001 and the Political Declaration of 2006 (A/63/812). We thank the President of the General Assembly for his important message, which we also support. In this respect, we make a call to further renew our efforts to reach true universal access to prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS by the year 2010.

Argentina considers that the right to health must prevail over commercial interests and that intellectual property rights do not and should not impede measures being taken for the protection of public health. In this sense, it has called for an effective implementation of the safeguards and flexibilities included in the Agreement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights administered by the World Trade Organization, as well as in the Doha Declaration.

Access to medicines by people living with HIV/AIDS has been improved and sustained through a policy of dispensing high-quality generic drugs and active participation in joint negotiations between the countries in the region and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry in order to obtain cost reductions.

At the same time, the optimization of strategies needs to be made a priority in order to improve access of persons both to diagnosis and treatment, while taking into consideration their social integration and the right to development that makes for a better quality of life.

Our country was one of the first in the region to introduce an AIDS Law, which has been in place since 1990 and whose aim is to control this pandemic. It specifically includes the responsibility of the State to guarantee comprehensive attention, respect for dignity and non-discrimination, as well as to guarantee confidentiality for those living with HIV/AIDS. This legal framework is complemented by the application of the American Convention on Human Rights, known as the Pact of San Jose and the National Antidiscrimination Act, as well as other legislative measures concerning social security and prepaid medicine, HIV diagnosis in pregnant women, the creation of a national programme for sexual health and responsible procreation, inter alia.

The Millennium Development Goals serve as a guide for the development and implementation of a national policy geared towards the health of the population, with focus on the targets for alertness, prevention and promotion of health. In this regard, indicators have been established that show that progress has been made in stopping and reversing the pandemic through the active and visible participation of all stakeholders, giving priority to populations in situations of increased vulnerability, such as boys, girls, youth and women.

We recognize the following as especially vulnerable populations: sex workers, transvestites, transsexuals, homosexuals, men who have sex with men, the migrant population, indigenous populations, people in situations of poverty, women, children and adolescents, drug users and prison inmates. Nor can we neglect in our response the group of older persons and their specific realities. The active participation of these groups contributes to preventing invisibility or discrimination from threatening their right to health and from hindering efforts to curb the epidemic.

Gender perspective and identity have been taken into account in national HIV/AIDS policies. There has been a specific focus on pregnant women living with HIV, 87 per cent of whom receive treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Their partners are also included in the prevention of transmission.

The Argentine Ministry of Health has defined a strategic planning process for the years 2008-2011, with the AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Division, based on four strategic axes.

The first axis aims to improve the accessibility of diagnosis and treatment for persons living with HIV, by simplifying the steps to be taken by patients, decentralizing logistics for the distribution of medicines, and providing quality control in laboratories and of the types of medicines prescribed.

The second axis is designed to promote access to condoms and other preventive methods through distribution that will guarantee direct access to users, integration of social and Governmental organizations, and coordination with reproductive health and maternity and childhood policies in an effort to promote safe sex.

The third strategic axis involves the promotion of access to HIV/AIDS testing together with counselling. The main goals are to establish testing and counselling centres in primary health-care centres across the country, in premises that are friendly and accessible to

the general population and to populations of increased vulnerability.

The fourth axis entails the eradication of stigma and discrimination, both in the health system and in society as a whole. That strategic axis, which cuts across the other three, includes the goals of establishing and strengthening friendly and accessible spaces for populations with increased vulnerability — including, among others, sex workers, transgender persons, drug users, men who have sex with men, and young people — as well as coordinating with other State institutions charged with protecting the human rights of all citizens, including the ombudsperson and the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that fragmented responses cannot produce results when it comes to HIV/AIDS. If policies are to be effective, they must be inclusive, cut across multiple sectors and disciplines, and be grounded in a non-discriminatory and human rights-based approach. We also believe it to be strategically desirable to call upon all Government bodies to work cooperatively with international organizations and civil society.

Mrs. Kafanabo (United Republic of Tanzania): The delegation of Tanzania is pleased to participate in this discussion on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Swaziland on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/63/812 on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. The recommendations contained therein warrant our serious consideration. We also take note on the reports in documents A/63/152 and A/63/152/Add.1 on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the progress made by organizations of the United Nations in achieving target 7 of Millennium Development Goal 6 on combating HIV/AIDS. We look forward to a discussion on those reports at a later date, preferably after an independent evaluation by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

HIV/AIDS continues to pose a great challenge to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In Tanzania we live with the devastating impact of that insidious virus every day. With the strong political commitment and leadership of our President, His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has continued to implement energetically the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, as well as regional instruments on HIV/AIDS. We have made considerable strides in raising awareness, which has positively influenced behaviour, encouraged voluntary testing and is eroding the stigma against infected people.

The Government has in place a national policy on HIV/AIDS and a national multisectoral strategic framework, which guide the implementation of HIV/AIDS activities. The policy and the multisectoral strategic framework emphasize the need for concerted and multidisciplinary efforts from all sectors: the Government, the private sector and civil society. HIV/AIDS issues are incorporated in our national strategy for growth and the reduction of poverty, as well as in Tanzania's Development Vision 2025. The development of the national guideline on prevention and control in the public sector is a further demonstration of the Government's commitment to fight HIV/AIDS and improve the well-being of the people.

Various interventions — such as behaviour-change communication, the promotion of the use of condoms, safe blood transfusions, the management of sexually transmitted infections, voluntary counselling and testing and the prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child — have been undertaken and are starting to bear fruit. Tanzania's HIV prevalence has declined slightly in recent years. The 2007-2008 survey revealed that the prevalence rate was 5.7 per cent, 6.6 per cent among women and 4.6 per cent among men. That represents a decline since the 2003-2004 survey, which indicated an overall infection rate of 7 per cent, with 7.7 per cent for women and 6.3 per cent for men. Those figures show a significant decrease for men but not for women. It also illustrates that, like other parts of the world, Tanzania continues to experience an increase in the feminization of

HIV/AIDS. There are, however, regional variations in the infection rate, with high rates in frontier regions.

However, new infections continue to occur. That highlights the urgency with which we must develop new preventive approaches and tools, in particular those that address the biological, social and cultural vulnerabilities of women. We also need to consider the special needs of persons with disabilities and those of older persons in our broad HIV prevention strategy. There must also be proper research into male circumcision as a prevention tool. Prevention messages have to be adequately packaged within a broad HIV-prevention strategy, so as to avoid reckless behaviours that further feminize the HIV pandemic.

We urge that funds be increased for research and clinical trials on new approaches and tools. As a country that is hosting clinical trials, we also call for capacity-building to strengthen our national regulatory bodies so that they can keep pace with new developments. Technical assistance will also be required, as new products are developed, to enable the Government to work closely with developers to ensure the products' safety, availability and accessibility.

We are encouraged by the increased resources for HIV/AIDS, which have made it possible to provide antiretroviral drugs to many AIDS patients. By the end of 2004, when Tanzania's care and treatment plan for HIV started, 1,842 patients were on antiretroviral drugs. By 30 May 2009, about 457,530 people were enrolled for access to antiretroviral treatment. Slightly more than half of them are receiving antiretroviral drugs from the 700 health facilities in the country. The target is to scale up to reach all persons needing such drugs, who are estimated to number 440,000, by 2010.

The provision of antiretroviral drugs prolongs people's lives and enables them to continue to be economically active. However, the gains achieved by providing such drugs will be set back, if we do not take extra measures for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of opportunistic infections, in particular tuberculosis. The prevention and proper treatment of malaria and other diseases is also critical in sustaining the gains achieved through antiretroviral treatment. Furthermore, the availability of adequate food and good nutrition for those suffering from HIV/AIDS, especially for those receiving antiretroviral and tuberculosis treatment, is crucial.

New challenges are emerging as we continue to expand our responses to HIV/AIDS and other communicable and non-communicable diseases. They include serious shortages of trained human personnel in the health sector, the need to build up the capacity of the health system and infrastructure, including adequate laboratory services, facilities and equipment, to cope with an increasing number of patients on long-term treatment and to sustain the prevention, treatment, care and support for HIV/AIDS.

Financing HIV/AIDS control programmes remains a concern with regard to already overburdened national budgets. The current economic and financial crisis further exacerbates the situation. We welcome the call by the Secretary-General for more resources for HIV/AIDS and his emphasis on the need to explore more innovative financing mechanisms. We also welcome the financial support that we are receiving from our development partners, in particular the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which provide 80 per cent of the HIV/AIDS funds in Tanzania.

While many gains are being reported on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, we are still far from reaching our goals. We need to scale up our efforts in all aspects of combating the pandemic and sustain our gains to make a world without AIDS an attainable reality.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): At the outset, I wish to reconfirm the commitment and determination of the Government of Viet Nam to implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. I also thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General and the Joint Inspection Unit for their updated reports on progress and challenges in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment and Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812 and A/63/152).

My delegation is encouraged that more of those infected have gained better access to antiretroviral therapy and other kinds of support and care, as compared to three years ago, when the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS was adopted. The stronger determination and more positive political environment in the battle against HIV/AIDS at the global, regional

national and local levels over the past few years have been reinforced by concrete actions and significant increases in resources for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries, leading to the first decline in years in the number of AIDS deaths, a higher percentage of HIV-infected pregnant women receiving services and, especially, the decline in HIV prevalence among young pregnant women in several African countries.

Equally important, new resources for coordinating technical support delivery have been developed, and country-level monitoring and evaluation systems have improved. All of this was possible only thanks to the all-out efforts of the entire United Nations system, in cooperation with Member States, international organizations and civil society entities.

My delegation is, however, deeply concerned about the fact that the number of people living with HIV continues to go up, with more than 7,000 people on average becoming infected every day and AIDS taking over 5,000 lives per day, mostly due to a lack of HIV prevention services and antiretroviral therapy. We are alarmed that a huge number of children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, and that the need for treatment still far outpaces the availability of antiretroviral therapy, particularly in developing countries. We are preoccupied by inaccurate and lopsided awareness and knowledge among the general population, particularly among young people and vulnerable groups, about HIV/AIDS. We also condemn pervasive stigma and discrimination on the basis of HIV and the criminalization of HIV transmission in many parts of the world.

In this connection, we support in particular the Secretary-General's recommendations to revise policies and programmatic responses to HIV/AIDS in changing situations, ensure provision of services to those who are most at risk — with priority given to women and children — and sustain long-term responses to HIV, by building durable capacity, achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and mobilizing sustainable financing for combating HIV, among others.

It is along these lines that Viet Nam has done its utmost to care for the almost 170,000 Vietnamese living with HIV/AIDS, while trying to reverse the spread of the epidemic, which has, up until now, taken the lives of over 41,000 of our compatriots. To this end, we have continuously improved our HIV/AIDS-related legal and executive control systems, including the enactment of the Law on HIV/AIDS Control and the National HIV/AIDS Control Strategy, and the establishment of nine programmes of action and HIV/AIDS control centres in 61 out of the 63 provinces of the country.

Many initiatives have been put in place, including the establishment of mutual help groups, compassion clubs and shared sympathy clubs. Information, education and communication have been promoted, culminating in the broadest-ever participation of the population in public activities this past year, including most notably the launch of the National Month of Action Against HIV/AIDS. All stakeholders — Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups, religious organizations, businesses and foreigners in Viet Nam — were involved. Increasing levels of government funds have been mobilized. International cooperation has been intensified.

Despite these endeavours, there remain many challenges ahead of us. HIV has not been fundamentally controlled and could therefore still spread. Most HIV/AIDS control centres lack personnel and equipment. Finances remain limited, resulting in insufficient supplies of antiretroviral therapy and the inadequate treatment of patients, not to mention difficulties in implementing programmes on HIV research, monitoring, prevention and intervention, to name just a few.

In order for these challenges to be dealt with effectively, international cooperation and assistance, apart from our own efforts, are much needed. As we are aware of the global nature of HIV/AIDS and of the commonality of the challenges we are facing in our country, we call for continued cooperation and assistance from the United Nations system, its Member States and international and non-governmental organizations, while remaining available to share our modest practical experiences in this field.

Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova): The Republic of Moldova aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier this morning by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on

HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812). The report, supplemented by today's debate, offers us a good opportunity to evaluate the actions undertaken by Member States and stakeholders in response to the global HIV epidemic and to highlight the challenges that still remain. We take note of the recommendations made in the report and reiterate our commitment to meet the universal access targets on prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

Combating socially conditioned diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis constitutes an imperative task for the whole of Moldovan society. The Government of the Republic of Moldova has taken substantial action in this area and regards HIV/AIDS infection as a high priority for the public health, with special attention being devoted to the functionality of the legislative and institutional framework set up to respond to HIV/AIDS and to the involvement of national and international stakeholders.

In 2007, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova approved the Law on Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS, which was drafted in accordance with United Nations standards, in particular the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights developed by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS with the goal of contributing to the development of multi-annual strategies that include both prophylaxis and treatment. The law provides for numerous positive inputs in the country's response to the epidemic that seek to fulfil our obligations under the relevant international commitments, democratizing the process through voluntary counselling and testing, the prohibition of mandatory testing, non-discrimination and access to legal assistance for people with HIV/AIDS.

At the national level, the State implements its HIV/AIDS policy through the national programme on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, which sets national priority strategies for prevention, epidemiological surveillance and treatment. The programme is an integral, multisectoral plan that was developed through consensus-based consultations with key stakeholders in the field, including the Government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people living with HIV.

The third national programme, for the period from 2006 to 2010, consists of nine key strategic priorities that were agreed upon by joint Government-NGO technical working groups and approved by a decision of the Government. It seeks to promote a healthy way of life, the expansion of prophylactic interventions, early diagnosis and treatment and decreasing the number of new cases of HIV/AIDS. The implementation of the programme is under the supervision of the National Coordination Council, which includes Government ministries, NGOs, international donors and seven working groups, which is consistent with the recommendations of the United Nations. Transparency in the operations of the Council is ensured through regular meetings and openness to mass media.

Under the national programme, HIV patients are provided with free access to antiretroviral therapy. Moldova is among the countries to have already achieved universal access to such therapy, thereby ensuring that all HIV patients have access to free sustainable antiretroviral therapy and that all pregnant women and children have access to therapy to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

A palliative care strategy for people living with HIV has been approved. A new voluntary counselling and treatment service has been established throughout the country. A coordinated referral system and focal points are also in place at the local level for voluntary counselling and treatment, which are covered by health insurance. In terms of treatment, Moldova follows the recommendations of the World Health Organization for the treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS.

The progress made by Moldova in confronting HIV/AIDS constitutes a symbiosis of efforts on the part of State institutions and non-governmental organizations. The significant contribution of civil society in the response to HIV covers those areas that are insufficiently addressed by the State. More than 40 NGOs are involved in the process of prevention, education and promoting adequate social support and better social inclusion for HIV-positive persons.

The third national forum of non-governmental organizations active in the area of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis was held in Moldova from 11 to 12 June 2009. The goal of the forum, which brought together more than 120 representatives from civil society, State bodies and international organizations, was to address

the most important topics pertaining to coordination and to strengthen efforts in response to HIV and tuberculosis. The forum focused on the development of civil society groups involved in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and on promoting partnerships between State institutions and non-governmental organizations — especially NGOs representing the interests of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Government of Moldova is undertaking the necessary steps to allocate sufficient resources from the State budget to its endeavours to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the same time, while the Government is committed to implementing the national AIDS programme for the period 2006 to 2010, the socio-economic problems faced by Moldova, which have been exacerbated by the drought of 2007 and the floods of 2008, have resulted in many demands being placed on the limited budget of the State. In that regard, it is evident that there is a need for programme-based budgeting.

Moldova has been supported financially by several international organizations and has received grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the World Bank. Partnerships between national and international stakeholders involved in the response to the threats posed by HIV are being developed on the basis of the national strategies.

Considering the importance of adequately responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and of guaranteeing better access to prevention, treatment and support services, especially for the populations at greatest risk, the Government of the Republic of Moldova is committed to further increasing its efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to HIV/AIDS at the national and international levels.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America): We welcome this opportunity to focus attention on the continuing fight against HIV/AIDS. We also thank the Secretary-General and his staff for their great work in putting together an excellent report (A/63/812) that underlines the challenge before us.

The United States stands behind its commitments made in 2001 and renewed in 2006. We are proud to be a partner in the global effort to halt and reverse this terrible disease. Our major contribution to the global fight is through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is the largest international health initiative in history dedicated to a specific disease. In the first five years of the programme, the American people have supported antiretroviral treatment for more than 2.1 million men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS around the world and have provided care for over 10.1 million people and prevention interventions against mother-to-child HIV transmission in nearly 16 million pregnancies.

PEPFAR has demonstrated unprecedented commitment to mobilizing leadership and building the capacity of local institutions in the fight against AIDS. The programme has also worked to build linkages with other donors and multilateral organizations, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The strong partnership between the UNAIDS family and our bilateral programmes in the field has been mutually beneficial.

President Barack Obama has pledged to continue PEPFAR's critical work aimed at addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis around the world and has called on all sectors to partner in the fight. PEPFAR and the fight against HIV/AIDS are a critical piece of a larger global health agenda outlined by the Obama Administration. Increased commitments by United States Government programmes to maternal and child health, family planning and the strengthening of health systems will provide much-needed support to countries. That comprehensive approach to health will provide long-term benefits to the lives of individuals and families and will contribute to the overall development of the countries in which PEPFAR works.

To maximize the impact and sustainability of its HIV/AIDS programmes, the United States is engaging with host country Governments and other partners through partnership frameworks. Those strategic partnerships are designed to build country ownership by more fully aligning PEPFAR country-led efforts with national strategies, national monitoring and evaluation plans and the international partner situation in-country. The United States is now working rapidly to develop those partnerships with host countries and other country-level partners. Increasing transparency and promoting greater aid effectiveness through the adoption of the Paris Declaration principles are conscious goals of that new approach in PEPFAR.

We applaud the Secretary-General for the focus in his report (A/63/812) on the need to redouble efforts to

reduce and eliminate the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS. We share the goal of extending life-saving prevention, treatment and care services to marginalized groups, such as men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers and injecting drug users.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General, it is also essential that Member States and others in the international community follow through on our commitments to ensure the rights of women and girls in formulating an effective response to the epidemic. That is underscored by many sobering statistics, such as the reality that, in sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 58 per cent of all people living with HIV/AIDS are female.

Through PEPFAR, the United States proactively confronts the changing demographics of the epidemic, working to reduce gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and to expand gender programming throughout prevention, care and treatment activities. We strongly support the work that has been done at the United Nations Development Programme and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to develop a gender action framework to systematically guide the United Nations system's efforts to address the needs of women and girls and the importance of including gender equality in our HIV response, and we urge continued work on the action framework as a top priority for the UNAIDS family.

In the overall response to the epidemic, resources will continue to be a challenge, in part because the large numbers of people who need treatment, the success of counselling and testing programmes and the growing capacity for AIDS treatment, even at primary health centres, all of which create an increased demand for treatment, which incurs significant costs over the long term. One way that the United States is committed to responding to that challenge is by continuing to seek efficiencies with current programmes wherever we can and by ensuring that PEPFAR resources not only achieve HIV/AIDS-specific goals, but also contribute to long-term strengthening of health systems in communities where we work.

By using HIV treatment as a platform, PEPFAR support has strengthened and extended health systems in many areas, including human resources, infrastructure, informatics, commodities logistics and laboratory services. Although interventions supported through PEPFAR are for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, the systems established and expanded over the past five years have resulted in positive health outcomes extending well beyond HIV/AIDS.

Looking to the future, the United States will work with host countries to develop a framework for strategic assessments and identification of priorities for health system strengthening. Health system strengthening is a key factor in successfully improving health outcomes overall.

Though we have come a long way, we face many challenges ahead in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. Our goals in the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the health-related Millennium Development Goals are ambitious, even without an uncertain global financial climate. The United States applauds the leadership of UNAIDS in prodding all of us forward and pledges our continued commitment to working with Member States and other partners to transform those political goals into a better life for the tens of millions of people living with or affected by AIDS.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/812). The report provides us with a snapshot of the progress made so far, as well as the challenges involved in addressing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

It is heartening to note that much has been achieved since the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS in 2001. A plethora of measures has been enacted. For Indonesia, today's meeting will serve beyond assessing the progress made so far by Member States and the challenges facing many of us. Today's meeting will provide a springboard for a discussion of ways and means to navigate through the current global economic crisis that will surely impact our efforts in the short and longer run. We are, and should be, mindful of that. The current economic crisis should be prevented from taking its toll on our objective. Instead, that crisis should be used as a springboard to forge closer cooperation and partnership.

It is encouraging to witness the various advances made in combating this deadly disease. However, new HIV/AIDS infections still continue to emerge globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. To our dissatisfaction, the lack of capacity in many

countries poses serious obstacles in determining the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which undermines efforts to provide universal access. That should be avoided, and we should come up with a comprehensive strategy to assist countries that are facing that difficulty.

Moreover, greater international prioritization and action to strengthen the global health system is much needed. That would in turn help scale up HIV services. But no health system can be sustainable if it is not supported by a knowledgeable and professional workforce. Promoting education and training are critical for that reason and should be a part of international action. Promoting efficiency can also contribute to a better long-term response. The integration of HIV services with reproductive health services could be one way of optimizing limited resources and maximizing impact. The United Nations system should also ensure greater coherence and coordination among its agencies.

Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to highlight Indonesia's efforts to implement our commitment. The work of our National Commission on HIV/AIDS is guided by four main components, namely, prevention, treatment, care and support interventions. It led the Commission to institute some key policies and action plans. Let me briefly underscore three of them.

First is the National HIV/AIDS Strategy 2007-2010. The plan includes preventive measures, including raising public awareness on HIV/AIDS and promoting less risky behaviour. The plan is being aggressively implemented in parts of Indonesia where HIV is spreading quickly. Secondly, the Commission, in cooperation with local government, provides guidelines on the establishment of regional HIV/AIDS commissions. Thirdly, the Commission, in cooperation with the national anti-drug agency, is strengthening action against illegal trafficking of psychotropic substances and other drugs.

Moreover, we are continually making efforts to scale up our response, including providing free antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS patients. The close connection between tuberculosis (TB) and HIV has also prompted us to establish a one-roof service for TB and HIV patients.

In closing, let me reiterate Indonesia's steadfastness to continue to implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation for the convening of this plenary meeting to discuss the Secretary-General's interim report on progress made in the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812). Egypt associates itself fully with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Swaziland on behalf of the African Group.

We also take note of the report (A/63/152 and Add.1) of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS, as well as the comments of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on that report. We look forward to the results of the second independent evaluation mandated by the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) by the end of this year.

HIV/AIDS represents a major challenge to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 6. Despite a relative slowdown in the estimated number of new HIV infections in 2007 and the decline of recorded cases throughout the world, the total number of people living with HIV worldwide is still over 33 million, two thirds of whom are in Africa alone.

Undoubtedly, the realization of the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 60/262 requires addressing the need to enhance national capacities more effectively in many developing countries, especially low-income countries, in order to strengthen the implementation of their national programmes and broad sexual awareness campaigns aimed at correcting widespread social misconceptions.

These efforts require large investments to build governmental and societal capacities, train qualified cadres, expand microbicide clinical trials, make first- and second-line treatments with antiretrovirals as well

as medications for co-infection with tuberculosis available at reasonable prices, inter alia, which many Governments cannot afford without external assistance that is free of additional conditionalities or attempts to impose certain social or cultural concepts that do not take into consideration the particular nature of the societies of recipient countries.

The importance of the continued provision of international support increases in the light of the global financial and economic crisis and its potential impact on official development assistance, which is being reduced despite international commitments, as well as on cutbacks in public spending to promote the advancement of health systems in developing countries. That is particularly true in view of the dire need, noted in the Secretary-General's report, to raise an additional $11.3 billion to bolster the ability of national programmes to achieve their targeted goals by 2010.

It is equally essential that we find radical solutions for the trade-related aspects of restrictions on the importation of medications, intellectual property rights, the problem of transit and migration, the recruitment of health workers from affected developing countries, and the reversal of the brain drain, so as to allow national health systems to advance and ensure affordable treatment and care for all.

In addition, the prevention of and fight against HIV/AIDS are substantially related to the comprehensive development process and support for efforts to develop economic, educational and health system infrastructures, and, more significantly, to transfer the expertise and technologies that are vital to reinforcing such efforts. That is especially the case as regards pharmaceutical industries, changing the social perspective on the epidemic, and enhancing the opportunities for early diagnosis and treatment with the support of all societal forces.

Indeed, the international community's responsibility has to be matched by a parallel commitment to rationalizing the use of resources in a manner that ensures effectiveness and within a framework that guarantees the concertation of efforts with social programmes already under way, particularly those implemented by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

Many developing countries are already implementing this framework with remarkable success on the basis of the "three ones" principle, which provides for one national strategic framework to guide country-level efforts, one national coordinating authority and a single agreed framework for monitoring and evaluation.

Within the framework of the international commitment to combating the epidemic, greater international efforts are needed in the fight against the illegal trafficking in narcotics. Further United Nations efforts are also needed to achieve the peaceful settlement of armed conflicts, particularly in Africa, which contribute to the draining of the economic potential of the countries where the epidemic is still spreading. They also contribute to the expansion of socially marginalized sectors through the stigmatization and negative stereotyping that result from the fear of infection. The spread of HIV/AIDS leads to an increase in the number of orphaned children susceptible to recruitment in armed conflicts, as well as to the increase of sexual violence that paves the way for the spread of infection among youth, women and children. These negative ramifications create further challenges to peacebuilding efforts in many countries emerging from conflict.

It is also essential to enhance regional cooperation in order to bring about a long-term AIDS response. In this regard, I would like to stress the importance of the international community's financial and technical support for the centre that the African Summit in Sirte, Libya, decided to establish in 2005 in order to promote cooperation on the continent in the fight against HIV/AIDS, alongside African national efforts to curb the infection and the resulting escalating mortality rates.

In this context, Egypt has sought to share its expertise with its sisterly African countries where the epidemic is most prevalent, believing in the necessity of South-South cooperation to complement, but not to substitute for, North-South cooperation. This approach is made manifest through the dispatch of medical expertise, technical assistance and training programmes. More recently, Egypt has embarked, in consultation with the private sector, on the expansion of its pharmaceutical industry to produce antiretroviral medications with a view to contributing to the reduction of the costs of importing them from outside the continent.

All of the foregoing highlights the need to address the epidemic with vigour and firm resolve, fully implementing the pledges we made in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, adopted three years ago by the General Assembly. We have to work sincerely to reinforce international and national structures and supply the necessary support in a manner that maintains the balance between the need to improve services and the need to ensure their universal access as soon as possible, that provides treatment and prevention, and that increases assistance and the efficient use of resources with a view to achieving our goals, especially Millennium Development Goal 6, by the targeted date and in all States without exception.

Mr. Sumi (Japan): Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's progress report on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812). My delegation also appreciates the international efforts led by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to combat HIV/AIDS.

The international community still faces many challenges caused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Therefore, Japan renews its commitment to proactively contributing to the efforts of the international community to achieve universal access by 2010. Japan continues to advance both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, along with the health and development initiative announced in 2005. Japan highly values the roles of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives. In this regard, my Government, one of the major donors to the Fund, has contributed over $1 billion since 2002.

The international community must not shirk its obligations to vulnerable people in securing expanding access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support programmes. Despite the current global financial crisis, we must not let up in our efforts to build stronger health systems in order to more effectively deliver assistance to vulnerable people. In that regard, we welcome the Global Fund's efforts to promote its support for vulnerable groups and the regional balance of the Fund's support.

In order to secure the steady implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes, it is indispensable that we increase the varieties of our collaboration within both the private and the public sectors. And, in addition to increasing financial assistance, we stress the importance of improving the effectiveness of that support, as well as improving its cost effectiveness. Furthermore, an approach specifically focused on a particular disease is not sustainable. We need to pay specific attention, not only to disease-specific approaches, but also to comprehensive approaches to strengthening health systems and maternal and child health.

It is gratifying to know that various agencies within the United Nations and beyond are working together horizontally to achieve such a comprehensive approach. Japan, for its part, will continue to work and support those efforts by playing a leading role in integrating the efforts of the world community.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to support the statement made this morning by the distinguished delegation of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. Today, the world is facing the most serious international economic and financial crisis of the last eight decades. It is threatening to become a disaster from both the human and the developmental points of view and is inevitably linked to the subject we are addressing today. The crisis is the result of the unjust prevailing international economic and financial order and its origins make it clear that the countries suffering the most are certainly not the culprits.

However, I think we can state, without any fear of being mistaken, that the efforts of the Southern countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including health-related goals, will have been virtually in vain, despite the huge political will harnessed to meet them. The millions of sick, starving and illiterate people living in the world prior to the crisis will now be multiplied as a result of that crisis and other related crises, including, among others, the food and energy crises and the challenge of climate change.

In spite of the progress made in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the goal to ensure universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes and to treatment, care and support services by 2010 will be hard to meet for many countries of the South, particularly the poorest. More than two thirds of the people suffering from HIV/AIDS worldwide today live on the African continent. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected region with approximately 4.7 million people with the disease, and where only

about one fourth of the people requiring antiretroviral treatment have access to it.

Given the current international situation in all its complexities, Cuba considers it important to reinforce the HIV/AIDS prevention strategy through sex education in schools and the mass media. Education and prevention programmes for youth to promote healthy and responsible sexuality are crucial in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It has been scientifically proven, especially in our region, that the sexual abstinence strategy is not effective in preventing HIV/AIDS.

Cuba believes the fullest enjoyment of the best physical and mental health possible is a fundamental human right, and consequently Cuba attaches great importance to the fight against HIV/AIDS and the fight against discrimination, which often go together.

The specificities of the Cuban health system, marked by its universality — the fact that it is free of charge and accessible for all — as well as the organizational structure of our society and the multisectorial HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme, guarantee access to medical services by all of the population. There are monitoring programmes and 100 per cent access to antiretroviral treatment programmes, as well as the guaranteed right to work, full salary, appropriate nutrition and all civil, political and social rights.

We have managed to contain the pandemic despite the fierce economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America and despite our limited access to new medicines and technologies produced by United States companies or their subsidiaries in third countries. Cuba has already produced six antiretroviral medications and continues to carry out research in order to obtain more effective medications and the desperately needed vaccines. From 1986 to 31 May 2009, 11,208 cases were diagnosed as HIV positive, 4,528 of whom suffer from AIDS and receive all of the necessary treatment and medical care.

At the same time, I should stress that Cuba has benefited from the cooperation of the United Nations and other organizations that have contributed to strengthening our country's efforts to combat the pandemic. Cuba, in its turn, has offered its modest support to other countries of the Third World. As is well known, one of the key elements of Cuban cooperation is in the fight against HIV/AIDS. More than 52,000 youths from 132 countries and 5 overseas territories have studied and graduated in Cuba. More than 34,000 of them came from the African continent and mainly from the health sector. Today, over 38,000 Cuban health professionals and technicians collaborate in 73 countries.

Allow me to conclude with a call to action. With the vast sums allocated to the arms industry — an amount that the press reports has increased even further this year — and the trillions allocated to saving big companies from bankruptcy, we could completely eliminate the hunger, the pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases and the disasters that affect our societies. We, the countries of the South, do not need promises but concrete actions. International solidarity, not competition, and social justice, not wars, should be the governing principles of a peaceful system and a just and equitable international order in which all of us can live in harmony and development.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): Allow me to take up the closing remarks made by my colleague from Cuba, when he made the comparison between the problems that we face fighting global health issues and the situation we are in with regard to the financial crisis, where billions, even trillions, are raised to support a weak financial structure. Indeed, it seems that money does not seem to be a problem when the problem is money, but it is if we are dealing with another problem.

In the Norwegian Government's efforts to respond to HIV/AIDS internationally, the gender focus is essential, as mother-to-child transmission prevention is an area that was lagging behind in the global response. This is a shame, and it must be rectified. In addition, success in the world's long-term response to AIDS depends on addressing the stigma and discrimination that make young people particularly vulnerable to AIDS.

In June 2009, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Goodwill Ambassador of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mette-Marit, in collaboration with the aids2031 project, will hold a young leaders' summit in Oslo to unite young leaders in the ongoing fight against AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Against this background, Norway welcomes the tone of the present report (A/63/812). It does not cover up the difficult issues. It is clear and it sets out

direction. This is the kind of leadership we expect from the United Nations, and this is what it takes to halt new transmissions of HIV and manage the impact of the AIDS pandemic.

We know that AIDS is not over and will not be over for many years to come. Even with the best scenarios for effective prevention, millions of new patients will require treatment year after year, at a cost that will be a burden on national health budgets and international financing.

As Professor Jeffrey Sachs put it in his talks yesterday on health, health is not really expensive, but it is not free either. This is why the AIDS response cannot make it to universal access on its own. We also know that many countries will not achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without managing the AIDS response. The social and structural factors that increase vulnerability to HIV are also factors that represent barriers to the other MDGs. We can no longer deal with AIDS with one hand and the other MDGs with the other — it is now time for a handshake.

A case in point is the need to address maternal and neonatal mortality, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, treatment and care for mothers and children and reproductive health and rights in ways that mutually strengthen access to services and make the most of limited resources — whether we are talking about funding, skilled human resources, infrastructure or drugs and supply systems. This was made abundantly clear during our debate on global health yesterday.

We note the strong message in the report on the need to deal with stigma and discrimination. We need to review laws that present obstacles to effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for vulnerable subgroups.

Norway underlines the importance of the work of the International Task Team on HIV-related Travel Restrictions and of the Secretary-General himself in drawing attention to laws that restrict the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV based on HIV-positive status only. Restrictions and discrimination associated with these laws in some 60 countries have proved to feed stigma and have a negative impact on national AIDS programmes and the achievement of universal access. Continued strategic advocacy and action at the global, regional and national level are now important, as is questioning the basis for imposing such restrictions and working to eliminate them.

Finally, I want to congratulate the UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé, on his new position. We will support him wholeheartedly in his work. We will work with him now, we will work with him in the Economic and Social Council this summer, and we will work with him thereafter.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): Allow me to begin by aligning my delegation with the statements delivered by the delegation of Swaziland on behalf of the African Group and by the Minister of Health of South Africa on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community. I would like to add Malawi's voice to this important debate.

We thank the Secretary-General for the report (A/63/812) that is before the Assembly. We note the developments in the AIDS response and the challenges that we continue to face in our quest to meet the target of attaining universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

Malawi supports the forward-looking recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report and is committed to translating the recommendations into further action aimed at the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

At the national level, the Malawi Government and its leadership remain fully and strongly committed to the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. To that end, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, a homegrown, overarching national development policy for achieving sustainable growth and development, identifies the fight against HIV/AIDS as one of the priority areas that need urgent and continuous attention in the implementation of our national development agenda and the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The implementation process of the national development agenda focuses on several specific activities, including the prevention of the spread of HIV infection, providing treatment and nutritional support for people living with HIV/AIDS and mitigating the health, socio-economic and psychoso-

impact of HIV/AIDS on the general population and high-risk groups, particularly women and children.

Most importantly, the Government has made the prevention and management of nutritional disorders, as well as programmes to control malaria and tuberculosis and to eradicate poverty, part of the comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. In addition, special focus has been placed on the empowerment of women and girls in recognition of the feminization of the pandemic.

Over time, some progress in the fight against the pandemic has been registered in Malawi. For instance, knowledge of HIV and AIDS is almost universal; the change in behaviour reflected in condom use has increased from 47 per cent to 57 per cent among sexually active males and from 30 per cent to 37.5 per cent among sexually active females; HIV prevalence among persons aged 15 to 49 declined from 14.4 per cent in 2005 to 12 per cent in 2007.

Further to that, 661,400 people were tested in 2007, compared to 283,461 people in 2004; 280,446 pregnant women were tested in 2007, compared to 52,904 in 2005; 146,856 people were on antiretroviral therapy in 2007, compared to 3,000 in 2003, with a survival rate of 78 per cent; 39 per cent of HIV-positive tuberculosis patients were placed on antiretroviral therapy in 2007, compared to 29 per cent in 2005; and 53 per cent of the 1 million orphans and other vulnerable children received different types of assistance, including direct cash transfers, as part of the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, launched by the Government in 2004. The National AIDS Commission is currently collecting data for 2008.

While the national HIV/AIDS policy has enhanced the fight against HIV/AIDS, challenges remain. Those include stigma and discrimination in all settings, inadequate human resource capacity, the brain drain of skilled health-care professionals, inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome donor fund disbursement procedures and procurement conditionalities, and the high cost of antiretroviral medicines.

In that regard, we look forward to continued cooperation with our development partners and with the international community in the collective fight against HIV/AIDS. Malawi will continue to build and strengthen systems that are aimed at improving the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS service delivery at all levels.

Mrs. Kondolo (Zambia): My delegation is pleased to participate in this important debate on agenda item 41, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS". From the outset, allow me to align my delegation with the statements delivered by the representatives of Swaziland on behalf of the Group of African States and of South Africa on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

Let me also commend the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/63/812, and for the recommendations contained therein, which form a good basis for our deliberations. My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that it is time to look to the 2010 agreed milestones in the global efforts and make the necessary recommendations for key actions in order to accelerate progress and renew commitment to the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for all who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Zambia is one of the sub-Saharan African countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. With a prevalence of 14.3 per cent of the adult population infected with HIV and an estimated 1.2 million orphaned and vulnerable children, of whom 75 per cent are orphaned as a result of HIV, the pandemic remains Zambia's most critical health, development and humanitarian challenge. The Zambian Government realizes that unless global efforts are enhanced to scale up our response, the pandemic threatens to undermine our efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In response to that challenge, Zambia initiated a multisectoral response and has continued to demonstrate strong political commitment by developing mechanisms, policies and programmes to effectively strengthen the national response. Those measures include the establishment of a high-level cabinet committee of ministers on HIV/AIDS and the National AIDS Council and Secretariat, with a cross-sectoral representation, whose role is to coordinate the national response.

In addition, the Zambian Government has mainstreamed HIV/AIDS into the fifth national

development plan and incorporated the 2005 national policy on HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis and the related national strategic framework on HIV/AIDS into the plan. In tandem with the development of the strategic framework, Zambia has finalized the 2006-2010 national HIV/AIDS monitoring and evaluation operational plan to enable the country to track its progress towards stated objectives.

The measures that my Government has taken have been centred, but not exclusively, on the health sector. Those bold steps have begun to show progress on key indicators. For example, Zambia introduced the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme in 1999, under which it is currently providing prevention services to protect unborn children. I am pleased to report that nearly 40 per cent of HIV-positive women are accessing PMTCT services.

Since 1999, Zambia has also been expanding the provision of HIV counselling and testing services. By the end of 2008, more than 1,500 health facilities were providing HIV counselling and testing. In addition, approximately 4,000 professional providers and 3,000 community providers were trained to offer that service. Approximately 500,000 people aged 15 years and older were tested in 2008.

With regard to treatment, Zambia continues to provide free antiretroviral therapy to an estimated 50 per cent of all adults and children with advanced HIV infection. The number of HIV-infected persons receiving antiretroviral therapy increased from approximately 40,000 in 2005 to approximately 150,000 in 2007. The number of centres providing antiretroviral therapy both for PMTCT and nationwide increased from 62 sites in 2005 to 678 sites in 2007. Furthermore, two thirds of estimated HIV-positive incident tuberculosis cases received treatment for tuberculosis and HIV in 2007 — an increase of 35 per cent from 2006.

Zambia recognizes that the responsibility for AIDS goes far beyond the scope of the health sector and even beyond the role of Government. As part of the multisectoral response, the Government has acknowledged the role played by civil society and the private sector, particularly in scaling up the antiretroviral therapy programme. The Government also continues to engage all other partners that can make a meaningful contribution to that response.

In recognition that the impact of HIV/AIDS has been greatest at the community level, the Government has engaged the community in both prevention and impact mitigation and has facilitated the flow of resources at the community level. Communities and households have been empowered through microfinancing, typically with small capital investments focusing on women. Social safety nets have also been introduced for families facing severe crisis.

It is clear that, although there has been progress, much more remains to be done if we are to meet the 2010 target, and indeed the Millennium Development Goals, and other regional and international agreed commitments on HIV/AIDS. As we scale up interventions in treatment, prevention, care and support, other critical areas and drivers in the HIV/AIDS response need to be addressed, including orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV; youth empowerment; enhanced investment in human resources; the revision of legal and policy frameworks that address issues of stigma and discrimination; and the issue of gender inequality and unequal power relations between women and men, which have a great impact on HIV transmission. Expanded action on these key areas is critical in order to strengthen the national, regional and global response.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the support we have received from various partners, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Global Fund, the World Bank, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, other bilateral partners and the non-governmental organization community. Given that Zambia's vision is to have a nation free from the threat of HIV and AIDS, sustained collaboration with our partners will therefore be critical in addressing this challenge.

We have come a long way in the fight against HIV and AIDS. We must consolidate the gains that have been made in the struggle thus far, especially as we approach the 2010 deadline of universal access and the goal of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS by 2015. Zambia therefore reaffirms its commitment to this cause and will work with the international community in ensuring that this scourge, which continues to ravage humanity, is finally defeated.

Mrs. Nazaire (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group, of which Haiti is a member. We would also like to commend the Secretary-General for the outstanding calibre of his report on the progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS (A/63/812), which will provide important focus on this high-level debate. Haiti is pleased to participate once again in this forum, which periodically takes stock of the terrible pandemic, in order to better prioritize the goals and coordinate the enormous global efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS, as reflected in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

In terms of fighting HIV/AIDS, nowhere has the need for complete local and international mobilization been as acute and so conclusive as it is in Haiti. It can never be stressed enough that if the encouraging results — especially the reduction of HIV prevalence from 6.5 per cent at its height in 1993, to 2.2 per cent in 2008 — have continued in spite of the ideological, social and economic upheavals, it is mainly the consequence of a fundamental realization and an exceptional pooling of the global strategic and operational resources that, on the issue of AIDS, have managed to rise above all differences. In following the path set out by the irrefutable compass of its national strategic plan, Haiti has made much significant progress with respect to the latest update on the disease before us today.

In March 2009, the number of screening centres rose by 11 per cent in a little more than a year, from 127 to 141, followed by a significant increase from 317,324 people tested for HIV in 2007 to 521,070 people tested between April 2008 and March 2009. Included in those numbers were 152,878 pregnant women, which is an important improvement increase from 2007 and is directly linked to the 14 new institutions offering prevention services and mother-to-child transmission programmes. Last March, there were 108 such institutions, compared to 94 in 2007.

Finally, in Haiti we now have 79 sites providing palliative care and 48 sites providing antiretroviral drugs. In large part because of aid from the Global Fund and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), 22,650 patients are now being treated with antiretroviral therapy, bringing us closer to achieving our goal to provide triple therapy to 30,000 patients by 2010. With respect to prescriptive care, national protocols to improve care for various groups of patients have benefited for more than a year from 18 pilot sites using a scientific method of quality assurance and improvement, known as QAQI. The National Commission to Fight AIDS has recently extended the programme to six more sites, with the technical support of PEPFAR, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As we have noted, with respect to prevention, care and protecting the rights of people living with AIDS, the role of civil society in Haiti has been fundamental. The important partnerships between civil society and the public sector continue to provide invaluable assistance in raising awareness and behaviour modification among vulnerable groups, particularly young people, migrant women, sex workers and men who have sex with men. It is therefore no accident that, year after year, these organizations of young people, women and people living with AIDS, the press and religious organizations have been recognized internationally, in particular through the United Nations, which last year again awarded one of its prestigious prizes, the Red Ribbon Award, to a Haitian non-governmental organization that works to eradicate AIDS. The choice of Haiti since 2003 as a site for experimental clinical trials, vaccines and various high-level behavioural studies can also be chalked up to our national consensus.

Finally, with regard to planning and the institutionalization of our activities, we must continue to integrate programmes to fight tuberculosis and HIV, to strengthen the roles of key actors and to decentralize intervention programmes in order to guarantee equal access to care. Moreover, in order to improve access to information on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, the National Programme to Fight AIDS has begun working with its partners to create a single national database.

All these gains would not have been possible without the broad solidarity movement that resulted from the Declaration of Commitment, which secured significant contributions for us in terms of funding and technical expertise from our international partners, to whom we reiterate our gratitude.

This overview of our achievements does not seek to imply that the trend of the past few years represents

a definitive change in the progress of the epidemic. We must remain vigilant because many indicators, such as those confirming the feminization of the pandemic, are still of great concern, while some outcomes, while positive, remain insufficient, such as the low figure of 170,000 people living with AIDS who are being treated with antiretroviral drugs, or the rate of effective implementation of the multisectoral approach. Similarly, the treatment rate for syphilis is only 66 per cent of those who have tested positive for that disease. That is disheartening when we consider that the seropositivity rate for syphilis is around 6 per cent and that Haiti is a signatory of the WHO/PAHO Convention on the elimination of syphilis by 2015.

Today, it is more urgent than ever to reach the more than 56 per cent of children born of HIV-positive mothers and to treat them with prophylactic antiretroviral drugs. We must make greater efforts to ensure that those children do not grow up prey to the extreme vulnerability to AIDS that has made 68,000 orphans.

In conclusion, while my delegation knows just how fragile are the achievements made so far in the fight against HIV/AIDS, we wish to send a message of hope and encouragement. The global mobilization of scientific, financial, humanitarian, physical and conceptual resources must not falter, as it is the only way to win the fight against HIV/AIDS — the major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is happy for the opportunity offered by this debate to reiterate the firm commitment of Morocco to the fight against HIV/AIDS, and our wholehearted support for the Millennium Development Goals, which make health a fundamental and inalienable human right.

My delegation of course subscribes fully to the declaration made on behalf of the African Group by the Permanent Representative of Swaziland.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the achievements and progress that have been made in the fight against this devastating pandemic since the commitment made by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth extraordinary session, in 2001, and reaffirmed in the Political Declaration of 2006. We are aware, however, of the limits to this progress, identified by the Secretary-General in his report (A/63/812), which are largely linked to the precarious situation of victims and their families.

Today, the impact of the economic crisis on the fight against HIV/AIDS makes it more difficult to secure international commitment to combat this deadly scourge. Only access to an arsenal of investments and combined strategies will allow us to eliminate the heavy human and economic cost of the epidemic. This presupposes, above all, collective and sustained political will, combined with a more substantial increase in financial aid, as the only way to ensure universal access to the preventive services, treatment, care and follow-up that can make treatment become more widespread more quickly.

Wishing to pursue that objective on an international scale, my delegation notes with concern the growing impact of gender inequality, which is favouring the spread of HIV/AIDS by reducing the autonomy of girls and women and their capacity to control the risks they run of becoming infected. We fully subscribe to what was said in the report by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to the Economic and Social Council, according to which the introduction of universal access to treatment is still dependent on the social, cultural and structural determinants of the epidemic. We feel that the cultural aspect of the international fight against this scourge has not been addressed as sufficiently as it could be. This dimension deserves tangible efforts in order to better raise awareness and to provide ethical guidance to the populations most exposed and most at risk.

Despite the low level of HIV/AIDS infection in Morocco, the fight against it is still a priority for my country. We have a national strategic plan, a single monitoring system and an authority that coordinates action in this area. The implementation of this strategy, thanks to the support and mobilization of all national and international partners, has enabled us to reach one of our aims: non-discrimination in the care provided and in the dissemination of the triple combination therapy.

The national strategy for 2007-2011, established by the Moroccan authorities in partnership with civil society, aims to reinforce the preventive approach in order to reach a million people between now and 2011. This plan is intended to develop and diversify opportunities for counselling and screening and to

ensure good-quality care, including psychosocial care, for those affected, including access to antiretrovirals in most regions of Morocco. Our efforts are especially focused on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, on reproductive health services and on the workplace in the private sector. Likewise, and in the effort to involve young people in the fight against this epidemic, youth clubs have become an effective way to raise awareness among that part of the population of the risks and consequences of this plague.

Finally, in economic, social, cultural and civic terms, the implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development since 2005 has made a tangible contribution to the national effort to reduce the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this national effort Morocco has been able to count on its partners, especially UNAIDS, which has provided valuable technical assistance in the form of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Morocco remains prepared to share with friendly, fraternal countries its experience in the work we have done on raising awareness, preventing and providing treatment for this scourge.

If the efforts of the international community to contain the HIV/AIDS pandemic have made possible some positive results at an international level, and especially in our affected continent of Africa, that progress should encourage us to raise our ambitions and expectations and to speak henceforth of the elimination and eradication, rather than of the reduction, of HIV/AIDS. The remedies are available, and — as the ambassador of Cuba, seconded by the ambassador of Norway, said — the funds needed to put an end to this pandemic are modest in comparison to the funds mobilized to deal with the financial crisis. It remains for us to make a resolute and substantial commitment so that future generations will be sheltered from this scourge, which kills human beings indiscriminately. That commitment is called political will.

Mr. Savostianov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Although the last few years have been remarkable for the significant progress made in fighting epidemics, HIV/AIDS remains one of the most serious challenges of modern times. Constant vigilance in taking effective measures against it, strengthening national public health and social systems and reliable financing and improvement of HIV/AIDS programmes, are, we believe, the ways to guarantee further long-term success in combating HIV/AIDS.

The cooperation between the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), which itself helps unite efforts to attract sponsors within the United Nations system and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, constitutes what is probably the broadest and most successful partnership in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We fully support the efforts of these organizations to solve these acute difficulties in safeguarding public health.

At the country level, the key condition for the effectiveness of efforts to combat this epidemic is providing appropriate leadership and planning across the spectrum, at national as well as local and community levels. It is at the local level that we can deploy targeted measures such as information and educational programmes and provide psychological assistance and medical services.

Unfortunately, my country has not been spared the effects of HIV infection. In order to actively fight this scourge in our country, we have created a Government commission on HIV infection and, within the Ministry of Health and Social Development, the Coordinating Council on HIV/AIDS, in which civil society and people living with AIDS are active participants. As a result, a more systematic approach has been employed, and significant progress has been made in improving access to care and the prevention of AIDS infections, providing care for people living with AIDS and putting in place major programmes and projects.

In 2007 and 2008, looking only at the federal budget, we earmarked $480 million for HIV/AIDS diagnosis and treatment and for prevention programmes, which is ten times more than the federal financing for these programmes in recent years. Combating infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, is one of the international development assistance priorities for the Russian Federation for 2007. Our contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria amounts to $40 million. Up until 2010, we will also cover all of the expenditures from this Fund for a $217 million project in Russia. At this time, the Russian fund has already contributed $200 million to provide assistance to developing countries.

Our experience in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries is valuable, as subregional and community-level efforts play an important role in combating infectious diseases. Taking this experience into account, the Russian Federation will continue to provide technical, financial and organizational support to countries in combating AIDS.

From 2007 to 2010, $50 million will be allocated to research on HIV infection prevention and the creation of a coordination mechanism for research in Central Asia and Eastern Europe as well as our cooperation with global centres on vaccine development. We are putting together a comprehensive programme to assist Central Asian countries in preventing AIDS and hepatitis. We have budgeted more than $30 million for this programme, and we are convinced that the political commitments demonstrated at this meeting, as well as practical measures for prevention, will provide significant input to our further battle against HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): While great progress has been made in the response to HIV/AIDS since the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, enormous challenges remain, as we all know. Canada is committed to meeting these challenges. Our domestic and international efforts are grounded in a respect for human rights and the recognition of the role of health factors in affecting vulnerability and resilience to HIV/AIDS. We work towards overcoming the stigma and discrimination faced by those living with and at risk of HIV/AIDS.

Partnership with civil society remains at the heart of the Canadian response. Policies and programmes are developed with advice from the community, including those living with HIV/AIDS or at risk of infection. At the international level, we have been supportive of civil society engagement in the Economic and Social Council and in the Programme Coordination Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The Declaration of Commitment outlined several broad directions for action. I would like to first consider the importance of reducing vulnerability.

Canada recognizes that social and economic factors, such as poverty and homelessness, lead to health inequities. Also, in Canada, the fundamental drivers of the epidemic are reflected in the heightened vulnerability to HIV of indigenous people, those who inject drugs, gay men, and women. Internationally, we promote gender equality and women's empowerment to address the feminization of the epidemic.

In its domestic response to HIV/AIDS, Canada has made significant progress in implementing a population-specific approach in research, monitoring, policy and programming. This approach focuses efforts on key populations and factors that affect vulnerability and resilience. By gathering population-specific evidence and conducting enhanced surveillance studies, Canada has developed a solid body of knowledge about the populations most affected. In partnership with affected communities, Canada continues to develop and implement innovative and targeted approaches.

Another key action area to which Canada is particularly committed is the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention. In our domestic and international responses, Canada is advancing effective evidence-based HIV prevention, testing and counselling approaches, including linking HIV/AIDS with education and new prevention technologies. New and expanded technologies, such as rapid testing, have been introduced and are showing promise in increasing access to testing. Canada also continues to invest significantly in research and programmes, including vaccine development, to reduce the transmission of HIV.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada supports the goal of universal access to essential care, treatment and support. To achieve this, we work with developing countries to strengthen their health systems and promote the rights of children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

In Canada, most people living with HIV/AIDS have access to high quality care, treatment and support. As people are living longer, healthier lives, workplace issues have come to the forefront. Canada is one of the main contributors to the Health Working Group on HIV/AIDS of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, leading the development of guidelines to create an enabling environment in the workplace for people living with HIV/AIDS. These guidelines were endorsed by APEC leaders in 2007.

With the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is growing recognition of the interplay between

HIV/AIDS and disability. In collaboration with UNAIDS, Canada hosted an international policy dialogue in March 2009 to discuss the unique interaction between HIV/AIDS and disability and its relevance to global policy development.

To conclude, although we know we are facing a global economic crisis, an economic downturn, we must not neglect our collective efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Strategic investments and innovative approaches will help to reduce the transmission of HIV and improve the quality of life of those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Canada is determined to work together with its global partners to draw up a shared vision for bringing the HIV/AIDS pandemic to an end.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): At the outset I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having called this meeting and for keeping this agenda item alive. Today's meeting of the General Assembly is testimony to the lasting commitment of the international community to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic together.

On this occasion we also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report on the progress made on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. The Secretary-General has rightly emphasized the importance of strengthening national legislation on prevention, of improving law enforcement mechanisms and of increasing annual financing to $25 billion from all sources by 2010.

HIV/AIDS constitutes a global emergency and poses one of the most formidable challenges to the development, progress and stability of our respective societies. Currently, there are more than 33 million people in the world living with HIV/AIDS, which constitutes one of the leading infectious causes of death in adults. In most regions it strikes at the heart, rolls back accomplishments in health and education, and leaves society weakened at every level. While it is encouraging that investment supporting the AIDS response has increased from a mere $300 million in 1996 to nearly $14 billion in 2008, there remains, unfortunately, a large gap in funding in countries where HIV is on the rise.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses tremendous challenges to the public sector, particularly to health care and education systems, both of which are areas of human capital investment important to a nation's future and economic development. However, it is also significant to note that HIV/AIDS is not simply a biomedical or demographic problem. It is also a development issue that is deeply rooted in poverty and underdevelopment. The consequences of increased infection include the loss of skilled labour, a weakened agricultural sector, a fall in life expectancy and the loss of family income earners through sickness and death. These challenges arising out of poverty and underdevelopment are further aggravated by the high cost of drugs, limited access to health facilities, expenditures on transportation and the lack of resources for antiretroviral treatment. Central to these processes are also the conditions of isolation and discrimination faced by those who are affected. This multifaceted problem therefore demands a comprehensive and well-coordinated response based on addressing the root causes that have fuelled this pandemic in poor countries.

Pakistan is fully aware of its responsibilities to achieve the targets for 2010 and 2015. An estimated 85,000 people are currently living with HIV in Pakistan, where HIV prevalence amounts to less than 1 per cent of the overall population. Although estimates for persons living with HIV in the general population have remained fairly constant over the years, the shift from low prevalence to a concentrated epidemic took place owing to an increase in reported HIV cases, particularly among drug users.

The response to the HIV epidemic in Pakistan has been a coordinated effort on the part of the Government and the United Nations system, civil society and bilateral donors. The National AIDS Control Programme has been in place since the 1990s. This comprehensive programme, with the allocation of $30 million for the period of 2003-2008, aims to control HIV/AIDS cases by creating awareness, strengthening safe blood transfusion services and avoiding stigmatization of vulnerable populations.

One year away from the universal access targets and midway towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we need to commit ourselves to reducing the global HIV/AIDS resource gap through greater domestic and international funding. This funding must be predictable, sustainable and aligned with national HIV/AIDS plans and strategies. All stakeholders, including national Governments, must be involved in building efforts at all levels to move in a

more robust way towards universal access to HIV prevention and treatment.

Mr. Puri (India): I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this plenary meeting on HIV/AIDS. This stocktaking is timely and pertinent and deserves to be fully utilized to review progress made so far and to reinforce the commitment of the international community towards combating the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Coming as it does at a time when the world is confronted with a severe economic and financial crisis, it is of critical importance to ensure that global efforts, particularly international financial and donor commitments, are further strengthened so as to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS. Otherwise, we risk reversing the gains made so far and losing opportunities in the future. We must work together at the intergovernmental level to enhance governance and coherence in global institutions with a view to exploiting their synergies and promoting international solidarity.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has played a major role in enabling Member States to put in place effective coordination and implementation mechanisms at the country level. However, developing countries are at the margins when it comes to playing a meaningful role in UNAIDS governance. This has led to a situation in which developing countries have not been able to have resources channelled in accordance with their needs. At times, Member States have not been able to utilize grants by the Global Fund. With the new partnership between UNAIDS and the Global Fund, a mechanism must be put in place to ensure that the Global Fund is accountable to a multilateral framework.

There is a need for UNAIDS to ensure that there is progressive strengthening of the role of developing countries in strategic resource planning, country presence, grants disbursal, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The functioning of such efforts must reflect the democratic and broad-based nature of the United Nations itself. This would be helpful in strengthening the sense of ownership among developing countries and in increasing the effectiveness of the Programme.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and our response to it encompass several cross-cutting sectors and policy issues ranging from political, social and economic concerns to matters of human resources, trade, investments and intellectual property rights. Developments in any of these areas invariably have an impact on the effectiveness of global, regional and national responses. Therefore, it is important that related policy initiatives and developments are formulated and implemented keeping the overarching objective of the fight against HIV/AIDS in mind.

A holistic approach that includes effective prevention strategies and access to low-cost affordable treatment for all is essential to combating this pandemic effectively. This not only requires mobilization of additional resources, but also their efficient utilization. Despite concerted national and international efforts, only 30 per cent of those who need antiretrovirals are receiving the drugs, according to the Secretary-General's report, and shortfalls are expected to continue.

India is uniquely positioned as a source of low-priced and effective generic antiretroviral drugs that could fill that critical gap. Our companies and research have produced triple antiretroviral, as well as paediatric, formulations that have made life far easier for patients. India is also at the forefront of global efforts to develop a vaccine against HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, there have been certain developments in the recent past that are counterproductive to global efforts to providing affordable treatment for all and undermine the public health dimension of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). During the past few months, several consignments of generic drugs produced by Indian companies, including a shipment of Indian-made antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS treatment bound for Nigeria, were seized in transit by the Dutch customs authorities on grounds of alleged violations of domestic patents and trademarks. The generic drugs in question were perfectly legitimate with regard to intellectual property, both in India and in the destination countries. Several developing countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organization and the International Drug Purchase Facility, have expressed their concern at those developments.

The Government of India attaches the highest importance to the protection and enforcement of

intellectual property rights in accordance with the TRIPS Agreement. However, it does not see the Agreement as divorced from the objectives and principles set out in its articles 7 and 8, and it definitely does not support efforts to enshrine new maximalist TRIPS-plus provisions in other forums.

The action of the Netherlands customs authorities to seize generic drugs traded between developing countries in full conformity with international disciplines runs counter to the spirit of the TRIPS Agreement, resolution 2002/31 of the Commission on Human Rights on the right to enjoy the highest standards of physical and mental health and General Assembly resolution 60/262 on the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. It is pertinent to recall that the TRIPS Agreement, as amended at Doha in 2001, allows national Governments compulsory licensing powers in the case of drugs meant to fight endemic diseases.

While we have taken up the matter bilaterally, as well as in the World Trade Organization, it raises a key question — whether developing countries, even abiding by international agreed commitments, do not have the right to have access to affordable medicines for their citizens.

India recognizes that political commitment is essential to combat HIV/AIDS. Our National Council on AIDS is chaired by the Prime Minister and the state councils by their respective Chief Ministers. That political commitment at the highest levels has been critical in containing the epidemic. Under the Council's direction, a multisectoral response is under way, involving the participation of the private sector, civil society and key Government departments.

India has a low adult HIV prevalence of 0.36 per cent. However, in absolute terms, it is estimated that the HIV-positive population is around 2.46 million and is the third largest in the world. Enormous efforts have been made to contain and roll back this epidemic during the past decade. The HIV/AIDS policies and guidelines in India reflect the view that the epidemic is a developmental problem rather than merely a public health issue. The third National AIDS Control Programme is integrated with various development programmes, like the National Rural Health Mission, the Reproductive and Child Health programme and the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme. The focus of all those programmes is the prevention of HIV transmission.

The National AIDS Control Programme in India is based on the premise that prevention is better than cure. It is committed to ensuring universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention. Seventy-five per cent of the budget of the National AIDS Control Programme is allocated to the execution of preventive services, particularly among groups with high-risk behaviour, such as commercial sex workers, injecting drug users, truck drivers and migrant labourers. Counselling and testing services, which started in a few centres in 2000, are now provided in nearly 5,000 facilities free to all Indians. That scaling up of testing facilities has resulted in the detection of 1 million HIV infections. It is planned to further increase the number of tests by 300 per cent in the next five years and to bring it to 22 million annually by 2012.

The Government of India recognizes that the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease can be as bad as the physical suffering. A comprehensive communication strategy on HIV/AIDS, developed by the Government, addresses that issue, along with the classical prevention aspects. Special attention is being given to youth and women, who are often the worst sufferers. An adolescent education programme covers more than 100,000 schools.

Efforts to promote an enabling environment and to reduce societal discrimination of persons infected with HIV and of their families are being made involving civil society, the political leadership, grass-roots level workers, self-help groups and others. A Government policy document on gender equality and a law on AIDS are being finalized which will, among other things, address those issues.

In India, the Government has actively involved civil society in the war against HIV/AIDS. As of 2006, 1,080 NGOs and community-based organizations had been enlisted by the National AIDS Control Programme to deliver targeted interventions. Despite resource constraints and competing priorities, the Government remains committed to ensuring that no Indian dies of AIDS because of lack of treatment. Presently, around 200,000 of our citizens are currently being provided antiretroviral therapy and treatment for opportunistic infections. Blood monitoring services to determine when HIV-positive persons might require

treatment are also provided free. We are also trying to make available second-line drugs.

We have come a long way since we committed ourselves to goals related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. One of our leaders said, in most moving words, that HIV is a most deadly scourge, a disease that is not a medical or a scientific subject alone, but a poignant social issue as well. India is fully committed to effectively responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a multipronged, multisectoral and multidimensional way.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): I wish to thank the President for convening this plenary meeting to once again allow the international community to reflect on and assess its implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. It is timely indeed that we undertake that exercise one year before the target date for universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, and as we move closer towards Millennium Development Goal 6 of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

At the international level, considerable challenges remain in our fight against HIV/AIDS. Even before the current economic and financial crisis, global progress in halting and reversing the epidemic was uneven, with its expansion outstripping the pace at which new services were being brought up to scale. Even now, however, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/812), the pace of new infections continues to outstrip the expansion of treatment programmes. Moreover, there is the danger that the global economic and financial crisis will lead to a decrease in the overall expenditure on social services in many countries, including on HIV/AIDS-related health treatments, as well as to a contraction of available donor funding for recipient countries. That should remain of concern as the burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic disproportionately falls on developing countries, but the burden of responsibility falls on all.

Barriers that prevent the majority of HIV-infected individuals from obtaining equitable and affordable life-prolonging drugs remain. Access to those drugs should not be restricted by trade- and patent-related issues. Efforts undertaken to fight HIV/AIDS cannot be made in isolation, but must be approached in the broader scope of addressing the causes contributing to the epidemic.

Various screening programmes have been developed in Malaysia and, since 2006, more than one million individuals have been screened each year. The rising trend in the number of individuals screened has revealed that Malaysia is experiencing a steady decrease in the number of reported HIV cases since 2003 and that there is a high chance that Malaysia will reach the target of reducing new cases to a rate of 15 per 100,000 people by 2015. However, challenges remain, including the feminization of HIV/AIDS, which is seen not only in our country but worldwide.

The Government of Malaysia continues to implement our National Strategic Plan to respond to HIV/AIDS, which provides a framework for our response over the five-year period from 2006 to 2010. The Strategic Plan represents the Government's continued political and financial support in order to effectively address the issue and is a strong foundation for coordinating the work of all partners in health matters and for working together with civil society to reduce the impact of the epidemic in the country.

The majority of HIV/AIDS infections in Malaysia has been attributed to injecting drug use, and 60 per cent of our overall HIV/AIDS response budget is allocated to the harm reduction approach. Harm reduction initiatives, consisting of drug-substitution therapy, needle and syringe exchange programmes and increased condom use, are being implemented to reduce vulnerability among injecting drug users and their partners. We continue to scale up the drug-substitution programme known as methadone maintenance therapy, with the aim of reaching out to at least 25,000 opiate-dependent injecting drug users by the year 2011. We have also approved the provision of methadone maintenance therapy in closed and incarcerated settings, specifically in prisons. Additionally, 2008 saw the scaling-up of our needle and syringe exchange programme, with the participation of Government health clinics in addition to drop-in centres managed by community-based organizations supported by Government grants.

Despite the country's achievements in its implementation of the harm reduction approach, reaching out to other marginalized and most at-risk populations — namely homosexual men, sex workers and transgendered individuals — remains a significant and formidable challenge for Malaysia. Realizing the fact that reducing HIV vulnerability among these groups is pivotal in halting the spread of HIV within

the country, the Government has been working closely and in partnership with community-based organizations and other non-governmental organizations to ensure that these marginalized communities have access to HIV/AIDS-related information, condoms and voluntary counselling and testing. Increasing the coverage and quality of outreach programmes conducted by community-based organizations has also been made a priority.

With regard to young people, the Government of Malaysia continues to conduct a healthy lifestyle campaign, which involves the promotion of good moral values and healthy lifestyle practices, early detection and effective counselling, as well as mobilizing community support and participation. HIV education has been incorporated into various existing programmes such as school health programmes and healthy lifestyle campaigns.

The provision of access to antiretroviral treatment is an essential component of all national responses to HIV/AIDS. Access to cheaper drugs has made a major contribution in enabling countries such as Malaysia to expand their treatment options and capabilities. The cost reduction has also allowed for a wider range of antiretroviral drugs to be subsidized by the Government, making it possible to provide first-line treatment accessible to all patients at no charge at Government hospitals and clinics. A recent development in Malaysia with regard to improving access to HIV treatment has been the provision of antiretroviral treatment to those living with HIV in prisons and drug rehabilitation centres.

We are continuously challenged by the complexity of responding to the AIDS epidemic, both globally and in our respective countries. Many challenges remain before us and we must focus our energies on fostering greater action and building leadership. Malaysia reaffirms its pledge that it will work towards realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and will continue its concerted efforts to reduce the impact of this epidemic and to contain its spread.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): At the outset, I should like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his able stewardship of this session. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/63/812).

I believe that all Members can recall the Political Declaration adopted in 2006 here in the General Assembly Hall. This important declaration reaffirmed, among other things, that prevention must be a mainstay of our responses to HIV/AIDS. It resolved to undertake efforts to overcome barriers that block access to effective prevention, treatment, care and support, and established commitments to set interim targets and scale up programmes to achieve universal access by 2010. We also committed ourselves to addressing HIV/AIDS concerns related to young people and women, eliminating discrimination against people living with HIV, eliminating gender inequality, addressing food and nutritional support, scaling up activities related to tuberculosis and HIV, increasing capacity of human resources for health, and providing the highest level of commitment to combat this illness.

The 2010 target we set for scaling up to universal access is fast approaching. We believe that it is an achievable date, if the commitment is given, as stated in the Declaration, at the highest level, and indeed, at all other levels.

Despite the current financial and economic crisis, Thailand remains committed to dealing with the issue of HIV/AIDS. As one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), combating HIV/AIDS is crucial to the lives and well-being of our people and must not fall by the wayside as a casualty of the crisis. To this end, we would like to share some of our national experiences, which have been recognized in many circles as successful. We endured the 1997 economic crisis and expect to survive the current crisis.

Thailand has set an ambitious and challenging target to reduce the number of new HIV infections by 50 per cent by the year 2011. Thailand believes that prevention is an important key element for achieving this goal. Aside from reducing the tragic loss of life and needless suffering, prevention also has the effect, in a wider context, of reducing the loss of human resources, one of the most valuable components driving a country's development.

As target groups for prevention efforts extend beyond the traditional categories of sex workers and drug users to include the new high-incidence groups of youths and women, methods to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS need to evolve accordingly. An important

means of promoting prevention among youths is education — raising awareness about and understanding of HIV/AIDS. The changing behaviour of young people in Thailand in relation to sex, coupled with their less frequent use of condoms, has resulted in young people becoming highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. To raise awareness among young people, some municipalities in Thailand have initiated projects to expose them to the realities of living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, eye-catching brochures with messages that are short, concise and easy to understand have been distributed, not only among young people, but also to other groups in society, with the goal of changing perceptions and behaviours among the population.

Thailand would like to emphasize the importance of awareness-raising, not only for prevention, but also for reducing stigma and eliminating discrimination against people living with HIV. In some provincial municipalities, patients who have been open and frank with medical personnel regarding their treatment for HIV/AIDS are reluctant to venture to local administrative organs to receive the allowance due them for fear of unknown consequences that might arise from exposure to potentially censorious opinions on the part of the general public.

To counteract the stigma in the minds of both people living with HIV and those not infected, Thailand's Population and Community Development Association and Pfizer Thailand jointly launched a project that grants low-interest loans to a partnership formed between a person living with HIV and a business person who is not infected. Such projects are a clear demonstration that people living with HIV can and do have a good quality of life and are productive members of society. It also promotes correct understanding and a more positive perception of the nature of the illness at the grass-roots level.

Thailand's efforts, working individually, with third countries and jointly with United Nations agencies to raise awareness and exchange best practices, technical know-how and experiences on HIV/AIDS prevention and care are not limited only to within the country, but extend out to the region and around the world, aimed mainly at the Asian and African regions. Those projects include exchanging best practices and lessons learned at events where youth participants are predominant, such as sports events.

Thailand once again reaffirms its commitments to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 and stands ready to cooperate with partners in order to combat HIV/AIDS.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.